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[GARRON DECLARES HIS LOVE.]

BREAKING THE CHARM.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"*Tempting Fortune*," "*Scarlet Berries*," &c., &c.

CHAPTER I.

The old house by the lindens
Stood silent in the shade,
And on the gravelled pathway
The light and shadow played.

Longfellow.

In the town of Chertsey stood an old-fashioned shop, kept by old-fashioned people, who had been married early in life and followed the trade of a grocer, much to their own satisfaction and advantage.

Some trees standing outside gave the house a rustic and cheerful appearance, which was added to by the smiling faces of Mr. and Mrs. Haines, and their only child, a girl about nineteen years old, christened Amelia, after her mother.

Mr. and Mrs. Haines had sent the girl to school, and she had been well educated. In the daytime she sat in the little parlour at the back of the shop and kept the accounts, making out bills in a lady-like hand, and receiving money from the shopman, Fred Garron, who, a year or two older than Milly, was not insensible to the power of love, and often cast admiring glances in the direction of his master's daughter.

In the evening Milly repaired to the drawing-room, and sang and played or conversed with those of her friends who dropped in for an hour or two. On Sundays she went to the Baptist chapel of which her father was a deacon and principal supporter. Night and morning the grocer had prayers, for he was rather strict in his ways and believed he was doing right in bringing his daughter up in seclusion and simplicity.

Some would have called Milly's life very quiet and humdrum, and indeed she found it tedious enough at times, but, being of a dutiful and affectionate disposition, she did not murmur at her lot, and was content to allow the stream of her existence

to glide smoothly on to the end without its surface being once ruffled by a storm.

Mrs. Haines belonged to a good old family, the members of which had looked coldly upon her for her marriage with a tradesman, such silly pride being not at all uncommon in this aristocratic country of ours; but death had stepped in, levelling all distinctions, removing mother, father, and other relations, until her brother, who was a physician practising in London, was the only one left to look down upon her.

Mr. Wadden, the gentleman referred to, resided in Chesterfield Street, May Fair, and had an extensive practice, which was all the more necessary as his wife and two daughters were extravagant enough to make him live up to his income, and sometimes a little beyond it.

Milly had been favoured with the photographs of her cousins, and often looked at them in the family album—fine, handsome, dashing girls they were, though Florence, the eldest, seemed to eclipse her sister Agnes in the matter of dress, which was extravagant enough in both of them.

Such a contrast they presented to our poor, simple little Milly, who, if she ornamented her fair hair with a blue bow occasionally, was afraid of receiving a reproof from her parents, who regarded indulgence in dress as sinfulness which it behoved them to correct. Her attire was in consequence of the plainest description, though she was always neat, tidiness in a woman being at all times her greatest charm.

A natural consequence of the way in which she was brought up was that she was demure, and wanted that sprightliness which distinguished her more volatile cousins; but occasionally her eyes would flash and her cheeks glow as if a hidden fire was slumbering somewhere in her bosom and only wanted the application of a spark to cause it to burst into flame. Her mind, however, was well balanced, and what reading she had gone through was calculated to make her believe that real happiness is to be found in contentment at home.

Garron, the assistant at the shop, was a superior

young man, of an excellent character, steady and industrious.

He was tall, dark, and good looking. If he did aspire to be Miss Haine's lover the presumption was pardonable, for her mother had married one lower than herself in the social scale, and perhaps the daughter might be inclined to follow her example.

Certainly Milly encouraged him so far as to play at draughts and solitaire with him when he received the honour of an invitation to drink tea in the drawing-room, and on Sunday evenings she had walked out with him, both dressed in their best. She had also accepted little presents of brooches and gloves, which he bought her out of what he saved from his salary, and on a grand occasion he had taken her to the Crystal Palace, though they were under the eyes of her father and mother, who accompanied them.

Probably Milly was tolerant of Fred because he was the only young man whose society she was allowed to enjoy, and any one was better than nobody. Be that as it may, the assistant dared to hope that she might one day be Mrs. Garron. He had one evening extracted permission from her to love her, but she had not made any promise to return his affection.

Matters were in this state when Mrs. Haines received a letter from Florence Wadden expressing a wish to pay them a visit for a few days in the country, and begging their kind permission to do so. She added that she wrote with her father's consent, and that he was anxious that the past should be forgotten, and that the two families should live on terms of amity.

The grocer shook his head, as if he did not quite approve of this new-born friendship. He knew that the doctor had been living beyond his means, and thought that he might want to establish intimate connections with his hitherto despised relations for the purpose of borrowing some of the money which, by dint of thrift and management, they had acquired.

In addition to this suspicion there was another objection, for Mr. Haines knew as well as any one the mischief which bad companionship is productive of.

If Florence and her sister were the sort of girls they were described their society could not but be injurious to his pet lamb, whom he had reared with such scrupulous care, to have whom contaminated by pernicious example and made discontented with her lot would have been to inflict the cruellest blow upon John Haines that Fate had it in her power to aim at him.

"I think it is unkind of you to raise any objection to so simple a matter as a visit to us from my brother's child," exclaimed Mrs. Haines.

"As they have been so long in favouring us with their company, surely we can do without them now," rejoined her husband.

"That is all very well; but consider what I have suffered in having no intercourse with my relations? Of course I have been very happy with you, John, and do not regret my marriage, nor did I ever do so. However, if Flo were to stay a little while with Milly she might polish her, and—"

"She wants no improving. The girl is well enough as she is," interrupted Mr. Haines. "I have brought her up to marry some one in her own sphere. She is a tradesman's daughter, and I have no wish to see her a fine lady."

"Just consider the force of association; Florence Wadden is so highly accomplished."

"Milly can sing a simple ballad and play a pretty tune. What more do you expect? She can read and write and keep my books. She is dutiful and obedient, goes to church, and says her prayers night and morning. As for Miss Wadden, what are her accomplishments?—riding, driving, flirting, dressing showily, and spending her father's money."

"She is an amateur actress, and talks in this letter of going on the stage and making a fortune."

"Losing a character, if she has one to lose, more likely," exclaimed Mr. Haines.

"Oh, John, what will you say next? I am sure she is a good girl," rejoined his wife, much hurt.

"Forgive me if I use strong language, my dear," continued the grocer. "But the fact is I hate and abominate theatres. I look upon them as a fertile source of vice and demoralization, and if you ask my opinion about Miss Florence's proposed visit I shall give it you candidly and unreservedly."

"Do so."

"I think it will upset our happy little household, and I should advise you to write and decline the honour."

"Impossible!" said Mrs. Haines. "I really must have my own way for once. I am always giving in to you, John; but here is a case in which I shall be seriously annoyed if I encounter any farther opposition. My own kindred wish to make advances to us. We ought not to refuse the proffered hand. Would it be in accordance with Christian charity to do so? I ask you that. I put it to you as deacon of our chapel. Should we not be flying in the face of Scripture if we objected to a reconciliation? Besides, I will grant that Flo is all you say—vain, frivolous, extravagant, and anything else you like to add. Will not our example be as likely to reclaim her as hers will be to demoralise Milly?"

This argument was so convincing that Mr. Haines could not answer it.

"The faith and principle which will not withstand temptation are not worth having, in my opinion, and you can have little confidence in your daughter," continued Mrs. Haines, following up her advantage.

"My dear," said the grocer, who always spoke mildly when he saw that his wife was determined, "I have had my say, and you will do as you like. If any harm should ensue don't blame me."

This settled the question, and Mrs. Haines, without any more ado, sat down and wrote to Florence Wadden, telling her how pleased they would be to receive her, and hoping that she would make a long stay.

Great preparations were made for the reception of the expected guest. The best bedroom in the old-fashioned house was swept and garnished. Ancient linen of peculiar value in the eyes of its owner was put into requisition, and Milly could not help her heart fluttering a little when she thought that she would shortly see and be in the same house with the fine cousin of whom she had heard so much.

Perhaps she would invite her to come and spend a week in London.

This thought was positively dazzling. It opened up quite a new life to her. She had visions of carriages, parties, theatres, and all the other delights of the capital, and her little heart beat faster when she fancied that a new era was about to dawn for her.

Only those who, like Amelia, have been brought up in strict seclusion can imagine the anxiety with which she anticipated her cousin's arrival.

It was in the pleasant autumn time that she was expected. The leaves had fallen from the trees, and were lying upon the ground, varied in hue, and forming a crisp carpeting for the feet.

The evenings closed in early, and gave a long prospect of enjoyment when the lamps were lighted, and the tea-tray hissed on the table, or the brightly burnished kettle sang cheerily on the hob.

As his wife had taken all management in the matter of Miss Wadden's arrival out of his hands Mr. Haines made no remark about it, nor did he interfere in any way, though he still cherished his misgivings, and sighed when he thought of the evil influence that his daughter would most likely come in contact with.

Mrs. Haines, however, thought it judicious, in her maternal capacity, to give her child a little advice, and she took occasion to speak to her on the subject.

"You will doubtless be surprised at your cousin's manner, my dear," she said, "because I expect it will be so different to your own. If you see anything in her to admire, by all means imitate her, but if, on the contrary, you discover much that you ought to condemn, do not hesitate to do so. Depend upon it that 'Virtue is its own reward,' and that a quiet, modest, and retiring demeanour is much more attractive than noisiness and display."

"I am very anxious to see Florence, mamma," answered Milly, "but I hope she will not ridicule me for being unlike herself. I have such a horror of being made fun of that I'm sure I should never survive it."

"I don't think there is any danger of that," rejoined Mrs. Haines, with a smile. "Miss Wadden is no doubt well bred, and she would not act in such an ignorant manner as to turn her host's daughter and her own cousin into ridicule. On the contrary, I suspect you are the sort of dear, unsophisticated girl with whom she will be much taken—her brilliant manner will fascinate you, and you will be great friends."

The mother and daughter were speaking in the sitting-room over the shop, and they heard the sound of wheels, which made Milly rush to the window, reaching it just as a hired fly stopped at the door.

"Here she is—it must be Florence, mamma, because she has two boxes!" cried Milly. "Shall I go to the door and let her in, or will she not think it beneath her dignity to walk through the shop?"

"Sit where you are," replied Mrs. Haines; "Ann will go to the private door and admit her properly. She will think more of us if we treat her with some ceremony."

Milly, dying with impatience, sat still and waited eagerly for the door to open. She was rather afraid of her cousin, and was anxious for their first meeting to be over.

CHAPTER II.

Anna Marie, love, up in the sun,
Anna Marie, love, morn is begun;
Mists are dispelling, birds singing free,
Up in the morning, love, Anna Marie. Scott.

MISS WADDEN was of the majestic order of beauty. Tall, well formed, with strictly regular, classical features, black hair tastily arranged and elegantly dressed in the height of fashion, she presented quite a contrast to her modest, almost shrinking cousin, who looked, beside her, like a daisy growing under a rose. Her manner too was easy and self-possessed. She had a well-bred air about her which showed that she was accustomed to good society.

Entering the room with a graceful smile, and shaking her aunt cordially by the hand, she at once won the old lady's heart.

"It is such a pleasure to see you, dear aunt," she exclaimed. "I have really looked forward to this interview for a long, long time. How silly that there should have ever been any barrier between us. But now it is all over, is it not? And this I presume is my country cousin, of whom I have also thought much."

She extended her hand in the same friendly way to Milly, kissed her affectionately, and said, in a low tone:

"You dear child! I am sure we shall be such good friends, and like one another so much."

Milly could only stammer "Thank you!" and wonder what marvellous perfume it was that made everything Florence Wadden had on smell so nice that even her gloves left a delicate scent upon the hand.

After a little farther conversation Milly, by her mother's direction, showed her cousin to the room she was to occupy during her stay, and assisted her to change her dress. The boxes she had brought with her contained a variety of expensive wearing apparel, which Milly could not help admiring as she put them away in the drawers.

"Would you like a dress like this?" asked Florence, holding up a magnificent blue silk. "I could give you several, but I suppose you would not be allowed to wear them. I hear you are kept very strictly. This dress I wore in the last amateur theatricals, when I played with Lord Cardington."

"Do you know a lord?" asked Milly, in astonishment.

"Half a dozen, my dear," replied Florence, laughing. "They are as plentiful as blackberries in London, and not half so nice. Peers of the realm are a delusion; I like rich commoners best."

"London must be a wonderful place," said Milly,

"that is, if you are in society. I have only been twice to London in my life, and I thought the shops were so lovely—though I could not see all their beauties, as I was in an omnibus."

"Which is an abomination I know nothing about," rejoined Florence Wadden; "I could not survive the infliction. Fancy being obliged to sit down with a dozen people of whom you know nothing—vulgar, common people! The very idea is shocking. I suppose you dine at one, and go to chapel on Sundays."

"Always."

"How dreadful! But if you come to town to stay with me I will show you how people ought to live."

"Will you really ask me to visit you? I should like it so much," said Milly, innocently.

"Would you indeed? Wait till we come back from Brighton, where we go every year for a few weeks in November, and you shall come. But now, tell me, dear, how do you pass your evenings? Are there any nice men about here?"

"The doctor sometimes comes in, and the elders of the congregation, and the butcher, and the baker—"

"And the greengrocer, and the candlestick-maker, I suppose?" interrupted Florence, adding: "Do, for goodness' sake, stop; your visiting list will frighten me out of the house this very moment if you go and tell me all its horrors—and what do you do?"

"Play at draughts, or sing them something, in which I can accompany myself. Do you play?"

"They tell me I am an accomplished musician," answered Florence. "But you shall judge for yourself, though mine is nearly all operatic music. I have brought 'Faust' down with me. Now, dear, you can take me downstairs. I am like a lamb prepared for the sacrifice, and am ready for the muffins and the watercresses and the tea."

"How did you know what we had got?" Milly inquired, curiously.

"Oh, I guessed it, pet, or a little bird told me, whichever you like," answered Florence Wadden, with one of her arch and provoking smiles.

The tea was just what she had expected, and the evening passed in a manner which to her was inexpressibly tedious.

She was made to sing and play; then she had to join in a game at whist with Mr. and Mrs. Haines and their next-door neighbour the butcher, who dropped in promiscuously for an hour's chat.

What was a game Florence disliked; it required so much care and thought. Of course she revolted, and got scolded by her partner, and, to sum up all, the butcher in an amorous moment tried to kiss her hand when no one was looking.

But Florence Wadden had an object in coming down to Chertsey which will be explained presently.

In the morning Milly was by her bedside as soon as it was light, and, waking her up, asked her to come for a walk by the side of the river.

"What time is it, child?" asked Florence, with a yawn.

"Just seven," answered Milly.

"Good gracious! I never rise until ten under any circumstances. Go away, and bring me some tea and toast about that time, and please don't bother me again like this, there's a good girl," said Florence.

Milly went away, wondering at her cousin's late hours; but she did as she was asked, and about eleven Miss Wadden made her appearance in the breakfast-room, dressed in a fashionable morning costume.

"Are you going to show me the town?" she asked of Milly.

"There is nothing worth seeing in Chertsey," replied Milly; "but I will show you over the shop if you like."

"Thank you—no," answered Florence, showing her white, gleaming teeth. "I suppose you are well versed in the mysteries of tea and sugar, but I do not care to make myself intimately acquainted with them. We will take a walk. Where is your father?"

"Downstairs, behind the counter. The boy has just come in with orders, and he is making them up."

Florence, after a little consideration, thought she would go down and see Mr. Haines. So they went to the shop, and she sat down in the parlour.

Fred Garron was entering something in a ledger. He rose, and, offering his hand to Florence, wished her good morning.

"Who is this man?" she asked, drawing herself up proudly.

"Our assistant," replied Milly.

"Desire him not to presume so far another time I shall acquaint his master with his insolence!" exclaimed Florence.

Fred returned her haughty glance with interest and left them together.

"Poor Fred," observed Milly; "how you did make him colour up."

"If you are on terms of intimacy with your shopman, child, you cannot expect me to follow your

example," answered Florence Wadden. "The butcher last night was bad enough, but a common shopman is an indignity I cannot allow myself to be subjected to."

"He did not mean any harm; it was politeness on his part."

"He should know his place. If you encourage such fellows they are always ungrateful and become familiar. But here is your father. Good morning, Mr. Haines. May Milly come for a walk with me?"

"If you will kindly excuse her I shall be glad," replied Mr. Haines; "she has her duties to attend to, and I never allow her to neglect her work."

"Oh, as you please; then I am to go out alone. It will be rather awkward in a strange place, but Heaven tempers the wind to the shorn lamb, and I daresay I shall find my way about," said Florence, biting her lip.

"If you will amuse yourself with the morning paper for a brief space I shall be pleased to accompany you, and show you anything of interest there may be in the neighbourhood," replied the grocer.

"Thank you very much. I accept your escort with pleasure, and will wait for you," Florence answered, smiling again.

Punctual to the minute he had appointed Mr. Haines made his appearance hat in hand, opened the door leading into the passage, said "At your service, miss," and showed her the way into the street through the private entrance, which was a tribute of respect which she appreciated.

They walked side by side through the quaint old High Street, and so on into the open country, where thereabouts is low and marshy, attracting considerable notice as they passed along, and Mr. Haines felt rather proud of escorting so handsome and well-dressed a girl who drew such notice from the observers.

"How is your worthy father?" asked he, after they had exhausted the common-place topics of the day.

"I thank you, well in health, but rather overworked and somewhat embarrassed about money matters," replied Florence.

"Ah!" said the grocer. "With his income he should have no troubles of a pecuniary nature."

"The fact is he thought of coming down to you to ask you if you would lend him a thousand pounds."

"Did he send you here to put that question to me?" asked Mr. Haines, fixing his eyes upon her.

"Oh, dear, no!" answered Florence, carelessly. "I merely mentioned it in a purely incidental manner. You may imagine that I always have my dear father's interest at heart, and I thought I would speak to you on the subject."

"Do you know what I should do, young lady, if I found my expenditure exceeding my income?"

"Retrench."

"Precisely so. I should cut down my expenses; things would then right themselves in a natural manner, and I must say that I am not a money-lender, in order to save you further trouble."

"Of course not, no one supposed for a moment that you were," said Florence, quickly. "I would not for the world offer you such an insult; but Lord Cardington said he would be security for the loan, and with his name I should think you would run no risk. Besides, papa's practice is worth three thousand a year."

"And he is in debt," said Mr. Haines, musingly. "There must be something wrong somewhere. Who is Lord Cardington?"

"Quite a young man. One of papa's patients."

"An invalid?"

"Oh! no. He has colds and that sort of thing occasionally; but in good society every one has his doctor, just as he has his lawyer."

"Why does not his lordship oblige your father in the matter of the loan if he is willing to become security for him?" continued Mr. Haines.

"I think he is not very rich and lives up to his income, but he has money, as we very well know. Papa thought," said Florence, "that you would not object to obliging him in this instance just for a few months. Whether you do so or not, pray do not say anything to him about my interference in the matter; he would be so cross. He will call upon or write to you in a few days, and, as a thousand pounds are little or nothing to you, I hope you will let him put himself under an obligation to you."

"I will think of it," said the grocer, who was a man of few words.

Florence Wadden congratulated herself upon having broken the ice, and changed the subject.

After staying a few days at the old house she grew tired of country life and returned to town, but she behaved with such tact that no one except Milly, to whom she unbursed her mind, saw that she was weary, and she left a favourable impression behind her.

Mr. and Mrs. Haines agreed to allow Milly to return the visit in a short time, chiefly upon the intercession of Doctor Wadden, who, on his daughter's

coming back, ran down to Chertsey to urge his claim upon the grocer, who, after some persuasion, and being chiefly incited thereto by his wife, lent him the money he required, taking Lord Cardington's note of hand as security.

When Fred Garron heard that Milly was going to London he grew moody and discontented. He feared that she would in town meet some one whom she would prefer to him, knowing full well that he could in neither person, education, nor manner contrast favourably with the dandies of the West End.

He made bold to speak to Milly on the subject. "So you are going to visit your cousins, miss," he exclaimed.

"Yes, Fred," she rejoined, "why should I not? Have you any objection to make?"

He was weighing out pounds of sugar to put into bags, and he went on with his work, though he continued to talk to her.

"Have I a right to object?" he asked.

"As my friend you have, if you think any harm may come of it."

"I do think so. Oh! Milly—I mean Miss Haines—I'd give ten years of my life if you were going to stay here," he exclaimed, feelingly.

"Why?" she asked. "Don't be foolish, Fred. What harm can come?"

"I don't know; I hope none, but I've got a misgiving."

"Then you'd best keep it, for I think it is rude of you to speak to me in this way," said Milly.

"That's just how she talks," sighed Fred.

"Who do you mean?"

"Miss Wadden."

"Then why do you not call the lady by her name? You are becoming very ill behaved, Fred, and I don't like it," replied Milly, donning out of the shop.

"I know how it would be," sighed Fred. "Directly I saw that girl come into the place I was sure she'd corrupt our Milly. Why, she hasn't been the same since. She's totally altered. What'll be the end of it I don't know; but master's wrong to let her go. London'll be the ruin of her, mark my words; she won't come back anything like her dear old self—if she should come back at all."

A tear fell from his eye, and melted its way into the sugar; but Fred did not notice it, his heart was too full. He was thinking that Milly was lost to him for ever, and this is not an agreeable reflection for an ardent lover.

CHAPTER III.

Shall I rejoice or grieve at the change my heart feels? Are the new pains or the strange delights that agitate me the greater? Oh! Love, it is thy work.

It was towards the end of November that Milly Haines went to Chesterfield Street, May Fair, to visit her cousins. The house had a brass plate on the door, and was elegantly furnished. Boxes of flowers peculiar to the season were in all the windows, birds of various kinds were kept in cages, flowers in pots were placed in stands, and gold fish luxuriated in bowls. All that taste could suggest and money buy were to be found in Dr. Wadden's establishment. He worked very hard; from ten until twelve he saw patients, then he paid visits. Often he was called out, and it was no unusual occurrence for the family to sit down to dinner without him.

The lavish expenditure of his wife, and especially his daughters, kept him poor.

The girls paid every attention to Milly. They lent her dresses and made her appearance as fashionable as their own, though they had some difficulty in persuading her to follow their advice and adopt their customs.

Agnes very much resembled her sister, but she was less volatile, her habits were more indolent, and she was fond of reclining on a sofa, reading novels, or listening to the unmeaning flirtation of the young men with whom their mother allowed them to surround themselves.

It was not long before Milly made the acquaintance of Lord Cardington, of whom she had heard her cousins speak. He was barely thirty—handsome, tall, with long, bushy whiskers, and a tawny moustache. But his air was dissipated. In a short time he had run through a handsome fortune, and was regarded as a libertine, who had little respect for female virtue.

To Milly he was divine. She thought she had never dreamt of any one so distinguished in appearance and so agreeable in manner. Indeed he had a soft, inguishing way of looking at and speaking to ladies which they found very attractive.

There was something, too, about the young and simple rustic beauty which captivated his lordship, and he paid assiduous court to her.

Florence Wadden was not slow in discovering this, and she rallied Milly upon it.

"You have made a conquest already," she said. "I always told you, child, that you under-rated your powers. Cardington is madly in love with

you. He told me as much, and asked a variety of questions about you. Of course I told him as little about the shop as possible."

Milly coloured up to the eyes.

"I hope you will not be jealous, dear Florence," she said. "If I thought I was interfering with you I would never look at him again."

"You silly pet," answered Florence. "Do you think I should allow you to interfere with my plans? If I cared for Lord Cardington I should bundle you off to your Chertsey home at once, but I have some one else in my eye. Cardington is not the man for me."

"Would you not like to be the wife of a lord, and such a handsome one as he is?"

"I am not particularly ambitious of the honour. Certainly I should never give my hand where my heart can never be, as the song says. Not even to win a coronet."

"Does his lordship really like me? I can scarcely believe it," continued Milly.

"He raves about you," answered Florence.

This communication set Milly thinking. To be the wife of a lord was in her opinion something inexpressibly grand, and she was sure that her parents would approve of such a match. But she resolved to say nothing about her chance, not even in a letter, lest his lordship might only be flirting with her, and she should get laughed at for her pains. Fred Garron was quite forgotten. She scarcely gave the poor lad a thought, and then only to turn with disgust from her recollection of him, and to blame herself for her folly in ever giving him any encouragement.

Lord Cardington endeavoured in every way in his power to show her that he was smitten with her. If he heard that the girls were going to the theatre or any place of amusement he was sure to be there, and would find his way into their box, and devote himself entirely to Milly.

Things went on thus for a month. Christmas was approaching, and Mrs. Haines wrote to her sister-in-law to request that her daughter might be sent back, as she thought her stay had been sufficiently prolonged.

When his lordship heard that Milly was to return to the country he took advantage of an opportunity which occurred one evening to speak seriously to her.

He had called at Dr. Wadden's with his friend, Sir Elliott Bridges. Florence was at the piano, Agnes carelessly turning over the leaves of a book. Sir Elliott was Florence's attendant knight at the piano. Mrs. Wadden was dozing in an arm-chair, and the doctor was out.

"You may have observed, Miss Haines," said Lord Cardington, who was sitting by Milly's side in a remote part of the room, "that I have paid you more attention since I have had the happiness of making your acquaintance than is usually bestowed upon a young lady who does not excite more than a passing interest in one's heart. May I ask if those attentions have been distasteful to you?"

"No," murmured Milly, while her heart fluttered wildly.

"It may seem odd that I should make you a proposal of marriage after knowing you so short a while, but I feel I can never be happy without you," continued his lordship. "What I have to ask you is, do you think you can give me back my love?"

"Oh, my lord!" said Milly. "Your question is so abrupt, and so totally unexpected, I can scarcely believe you are in earnest."

"I am indeed, and you will make me the happiest of men if you will consent to be my bride," he said.

"May I not have time to consider? My parents ought to be consulted. If you will go to Chertsey—"

"No," he exclaimed. "I have my own reasons, which I will afterwards explain to you, for making our union a private one."

"But, if you love me as you say, how can you object to publicity when all must be known some day?"

"Ah! some day," said Lord Cardington. "But not now. My proposal is that we be privately married, say before the registrar, spend the honeymoon at Brighton, and afterwards visit your friends and announce our union. Will you consent? Do take compassion upon me. I am entirely your slave, dear, dear Milly!"

"Slaves usually obey," she said, with a smile.

"So will I. Yet I wish to have my own way in this particular. Rest assured you shall never repent your compliance with my request, which will appear honourable enough to you when you know all."

Milly cast her eyes upon the ground. She thought she was dreaming, and the dream of bliss was so pleasant that she dreaded some rude awakening.

"Speak, darling, for Heaven's sake, speak! I cannot bear this suspense," urged his lordship, taking her hand in his and pressing it affectionately.

Constrained against her will, she murmured a faint affirmative.

"Thanks, dearest, a thousand times. I breathe again," exclaimed his lordship, gazing at her with eyes of admiration.

The music suddenly stopped, and Florence said: "I wish, Lord Cardington, you would have the goodness to come here and give us your opinion about this morcean of Gounod's. Sir Elliott will have it that it is pitched in too high a key for my voice, and I beg to differ in opinion with him."

His lordship rose, as in duty bound, and went over to the piano, leaving Milly in a whirl. She could not yet realize what had happened.

Was it possible that she, the demure little beauty of Chertsey, the tradesman's daughter, had been asked in sober earnest to become the wife of the accomplished Lord Cardington, and that she had consented?

Yet it must be so.

Before she was aware of it Sir Elliott Bridges had taken the seat on the sofa by her side which was vacated by Lord Cardington but a few moments previously.

The presence of this man, tall, thin, dark, forbidding, acted like ice upon her, and chilled her to the heart. She felt he was near her before she saw him.

"Miss Haines," he said, in a low voice.

She started and fixed her gaze upon him inquiringly.

"Lord Cardington has been talking to you."

"Why not, sir?" she asked, a little proudly, for she was to be a peeress, and it became her to be brave.

"He has made you an offer of marriage. Indeed he hinted at some such step in conversation with me when dining at the club," continued Sir Elliott. "Now I don't know why I should interest myself in you, but I wish to warn you, and I say—beware!"

"Beware of what?" asked Milly, turning pale, and trembling.

"Of his lordship, of the future—distrust every one. Be vigilant. I can see a crisis in your fate. The hand of destiny is uplifted. The lines of life are crossing each other. Beware!"

Milly was so alarmed at the ominous tone in which he spoke that she uttered a slight scream, and closed her eyes to shut out the horrid vision of forebodings which he had conjured up.

When she opened her eyes again Sir Elliott had gone.

She saw objects faintly, and felt ill and giddy. The excitement of the last hour had been too much even for her strong country frame.

What could the meaning be of Sir Elliott Bridges's denunciation of his friend Lord Cardington? Was he jealous of his good fortune, and did he want to make love to her himself? Milly was induced to think so, and when his lordship came to wish her good night she smiled affectionately upon him, determined not to believe one word to his discredit.

"To-morrow, dearest," said Lord Cardington, "I will call here as if to see you off to the station, on your way home. We will, however, go to the registrar's office—for what reason you know. Do you understand?"

Milly answered with her ever-succeeding blushes. "Not a word of this to either of your cousins—in fact, do not breathe a syllable to a living soul."

"As you wish," she replied.

"Until to-morrow, darling," he added.

She faintly murmured the word "to-morrow." He grasped her hand and glided away.

Tumultuous thoughts coursed through her teeming brain. What a to-morrow it was to be for her! To what grand dignity did she not find she was born!

She revelled in the expectation of all the refined delights which as Lady Cardington she should enjoy; but a sharp pang shot through her heart as she thought of the warning so solemnly given her.

What could it mean? Time alone would show.

Uneasily passed the night, and it was with an aching head and feverish lips that she awoke, longing for the hour to come when she should be alone with Lord Cardington, and with sublime confidence could throw herself into his arms and tell him she was his own for ever.

(To be continued.)

THE CULTIVATION OF ESPARTO IN FRANCE.—The acclimatization of esparto in France is a matter receiving attention. The administration charged with the care of the forests, rivers, etc., have under consideration a plan for the acclimatization of it in public lands in the south of France. Its cultivation has already been tried in several communes, on ground belonging to the municipal authorities which had hitherto remained unemployed, and with fair promise of success. The cultivation of the plant is found to cost but little, and great results are expected from the proposed scheme. The importance of this rush to our paper-makers, and its comparative scarcity and cost, have recently been very clearly demonstrated, and the results of the plan for producing it on the waste lands in the south of

France will doubtless be looked for with much interest. It is added that the exports of esparto from Algeria represent several millions of francs per annum, and one naturally asks why its development in that colony does not receive more attention. It is not easy to imagine the market overstocked.

SCIENCE.

A DRESSING FOR GOODS.—A dressing for goods, according to Finckh, may be made by boiling two parts of caustic soda with four to five parts of palm oil to a soap, which is then dissolved in more water and mixed with thirty parts glycerine of 30° Beck. The mixture should then be cooled, and eight parts of wheat starch stirred in, and water added to bring the weight of the whole up to 1,000 parts. The addition of a little carbolic acid will protect this from fermentation. Of this mixture add 6 to 8 pounds to every hundred pounds of potato starch used.

SULPHIDE OF BISMUTH.—Bismuth, in the presence of or in combination with sulphur, yields a beautiful red coating, when passed before the blow-pipe on a large piece of charcoal, upon the addition of a little pulverized iodide of potassium. A finely pulverized mixture of equal parts of sulphur and iodide of potassium is best kept for such purpose, and makes an excellent test material for bismuth. In making these investigations V. Kobell met a green mineral which occurs associated with joesite at St. José de Madureira, Brazil, and which proved to be bismuthite, not previously noticed at that locality.

HOW TO SHAVE.—As you strap your razor strap the two sides alternately, and keep the back of your razor always on the strap, as you turn it from side to side. You thus avoid cutting your strap and turning the edge of your razor. As you shave keep your razor almost parallel with the skin, and not at a great angle with it. Give your razor also a slight lateral motion. In fact, to borrow the simile of the artist, "the more you can make your shaving like mowing grass with a scythe the better." Do not make faces as you shave, with the object of making a better surface for your razor to act upon. The skin when strained is easily cut. Adopt these hints and you will bless the unknown giver.

A NOVEL ADDITION TO THE DINNER TABLE.—We are to have a revolution, it appears, in wine glasses. London porter requires pewter, and hock a green glass, and it has now been discovered that sherry is not sherry unless drunk out of wood, so that we shall shortly have our dining tables laid out with tiny carved cups, instead of the orthodox wine glass with which we have long been familiar. At present the idea is only in its infancy, awaiting the artists who have under consideration the design of the new sherry cups. We may, however, mention that they will be larger than the present wine glass, more like the old port glasses which our grandfathers used.

BLEACHING.—The residues from the manufacture of chlorine, consisting chiefly of chloride of manganese, are treated with chalk to precipitate the iron; after separating the liquid from this precipitate by decantation, the manganese is precipitated as sesquioxide by lime. This last, by heating with soda in a current of air, gives the green manganate of soda. The mass contains 50 to 60 per cent. of pure manganate. On mixing it with sulphate of magnesia and adding water, a solution of permanganate is obtained. The principle on which the bleaching depends is the deoxidation of the permanganate in contact with the colouring matters accompanying vegetable or animal fibres. A deposit of oxide of manganese is formed on the goods, which, by the action of sulphurous acid, is converted into sulphate of the protoxide, and may be washed out, leaving the goods white. The sulphurous acid is prepared by heating dry copperas with sulphur to a low red heat.

DETECTION OF ARSENIC IN PAPER HANGINGS, DYED AND PRINTED FABRICS AND IN COLOURS.—The arsenical copper colours may best be detected by Bettendorff's process. The sample is covered with pure hydrochloric acid containing 25 per cent. of real acid, in such quantity that after it has been digested for 15 or 30 minutes 20 drops of the clear liquid can be poured off. If the liquid is dark or turbid some more hydrochloric acid must be added, and the solution filtered. About 20 drops are poured into a test tube in which a knife-point full of chloride of sodium and the same quantity of protochloride of tin (stannous chloride) have been placed. When these salts have become a thin paste, pure concentrated sulphuric acid is quickly but carefully added to about double the volume, so that the mixture grows hot, and fumes of hydrochloric acid gas escape. After the first violent reaction is over, more pure hydrochloric acid is added. Arsenic, if present, separates in the metallic state, rendering the liquid

a dark gray brown or brown and turbid, and is readily deposited in diluting the liquid.

CLEANING WATCHES AND CLOCKS.

This invention consists in immersing the "movements" of clocks and watches in naphtha or some equivalent volatile liquid, and exposing them to heated air, thereby, it is claimed, saving much time and expense.

The inventor thus describes his process:

"In carrying out my invention and discovery I in the first place take the 'movement' of the watch or the clock from its case; and, in case the watch has a 'dust-proof cap,' that also is removed, so that the liquid will have a free circulation through the works. I now hold the movement with a pair of pliers or other instrument, and immerse it in pure naphtha or other pure volatile liquid of a similar nature. While the movement is immersed it is moved about or twirled in the liquid, so that all parts will be exposed to its action, and so that the liquid will pass rapidly through the works, and wash the dust and clean away the old oil. This operation is completed in a few minutes, after which the movement is exposed to air heated to a temperature a little above that of the surrounding atmosphere.

"The evaporation of the naphtha or other volatile liquid is so rapid, after the movement is taken from it, that, unless it is exposed to artificial heat, the moisture of the common atmosphere will be condensed upon it, giving it the appearance of 'sweating.' From this higher temperature the movement is cooled down gradually to that of the surrounding atmosphere. The pivots or frictional points are touched with lubricating oil, and the work is done.

"The whole process necessarily occupies not more than six or eight minutes of time. The result is satisfactory in every particular, as frequent experiments have proved, while the actual cost is almost nothing when compared with the price ordinarily charged for cleaning watches and clocks. No taking to pieces and brushing can make the parts more perfectly clean and bright than my process."

DRYING BY COLD.

Most people have an idea that to dry anything rapidly requires the agency of artificial heat. This is a mistake. Chemists are cognizant of many methods of drying substances where heat, above the ordinary temperature, is not employed.

One of these consists in placing the substance to be dried in a close compartment in which is also placed an open vessel containing strong sulphuric acid. Sulphuric acid has a strong affinity for water, and takes water from the air surrounding it. The air, which also has a strong affinity for water—though weaker than the acid—thus dried, takes moisture from the substance to be desiccated. This moisture is seized by the sulphuric acid, and so the air, acting as a conveyor, goes on taking water and giving it up to the acid till the desiccation is completed. In this way substances may be dried that could never be made to yield their moisture under the action of heat in an ordinary atmosphere, or which would be injured by heating. Moist gases may be dried by passing them through the interstices in a collection of fragments of chloride of calcium, quicklime, fused potassa, or soda, each of which has stronger affinity for water than gases have.

Whenever any substance has a greater attraction for water than the expansive force of heat can overcome, it cannot be dried by heat; and the converse is also true. In the process of evaporating a liquid in an open vessel, or in the desiccation of a solid in a common kiln or oven, the moisture driven off by the heat is seized upon and absorbed by the air. If the air has less water than it has capacity to hold in suspension, the water evaporated disappears from sight and assumes the condition of a transparent vapour intimately mingled with the gases of the atmosphere. If, however, the capacity of the air is satisfied, the moisture assumes the form of a cloud of fog or mist, or is even deposited in the form of rain, perhaps in the form of snow or hoar frost, if the temperature is sufficiently low.

The capacity of air to hold suspended water vapour increases as its temperature rises, and vice versa, so that, by heating it, it may be made to take from substances moisture which it will deposit on cooling, thus becoming a conveyor of moisture, as in the process mentioned above where sulphuric acid is employed.

We have seen the moisture so far extracted from air admitted into a chamber, the walls of which were surrounded by a refrigerating mixture, that the weight of the volume was considerably diminished.

By thus continually extracting its moisture through the agency of cold, air at low temperatures might be made the vehicle for rapidly desiccating many substances that heat would injure; and there is no doubt this principle might be applied to advantage in some industries.



[THE CAVERN.]

VICTOR AND VANQUISHED.

CHAPTER XVII.

Oth.: What is the matter here?
 Mon.: I bleed still; I am hurt to the death.

Shakespeare.

A YELL from the soldiers told that they had discovered the fugitives, and two or three pistol shots were fired by way of ordering a halt.

"Humph!" grunted Watt, contemptuously, striding on.

Another volley of balls followed them, as yet too far off to reach them, but sufficiently indicative of what they had to expect.

"The sahib will be sacrificed!" said the Gentoo, looking behind him.

"Just you keep quiet, and we'll show them a trick or two," retorted Slygreen, drawing the ends of his mantle over his shoulders, and bending his broad back until he ran almost double.

"Walk short!" grunted he.

The old man stooped low and followed him with long, swinging strides.

Suddenly Watt gave utterance to a series of most melancholy roars, in imitation of an enraged bull, and instantly led the way behind the angle of the cliff.

"Who would take a halfpenny when he might get a crown?" said he to the astonished Gentoo. "They'll not run after a poor brute of a bull when they see Master Hereward's chain ladder under his den."

As he spoke a small boat was pushed out of a cavity under the rock, and rowed rapidly towards them by Badoura.

They pulled it up, placed their senseless burden in the bottom, jumped in, and swept far out to sea.

In a few minutes the pursuers, who were gathered round the cable on the sand, caught sight of them, gave an enraged cry, and sent a volley of pistol shots after them, to which Watt replied by a return fire of scathing badinage, until distance robbed his eloquence of half its stings.

Foiled completely, the soldiers stood irresolute for a short time, then hurried away, leaving two to watch the beach.

They had gone to fetch another boat.

Watt seized both oars and rowed like a giant, sending the crazy little barque spinning into the swelling surf like a sea-gull, and almost lifting it out of the water by his tremendous strokes.

Badoura, kneeling in the bottom of the boat, gazed timidly and sadly upon the death-pale face and closed

eyelids of the youth, and Seyd, crouched in the bow, looking keenly from right to left for shoals.

After some time of desperate rowing Watt turned the boat's course, and ran into a cavern which the waves had long since hollowed out of the cliff.

When they were in utter darkness he paused and whistled shrilly.

Immediately the whistle echoed from a distance, and a lurid light flickered across the water upon which he had so fearlessly rowed.

Watt rowed on for a considerable distance, and struck bottom beside a natural platform.

Several men stood there—one holding a torch. They were escaped insurgents.

In a few words Watt explained to them the rescue of their chief, and with the deepest commiseration upon their rough faces they raised him from the boat and proceeded rapidly into the heart of the cave.

For many minutes the little procession moved onward through subterranean passages, ever and anon passing through a cavern, which ere long narrowed into the natural corridor.

It was a wild scene.

The fitful flaring of the torch which was borne in front illumined the up-turned face of Hereward, and revealed it calm and white as a sculpture of repose.

His locks were tinged with amber, and in places dyed with blood, and his hands hung lifelessly on either side, stained with gore.

The lovely eyes of the Hindoo maid were fixed in anguish on that carven countenance, and sometimes she stooped and kissed one of his hands.

Her servant walked humbly behind her, betraying no knowledge of what was passing.

Watt kept close at his master's feet, and from time to time cast anxious looks upon him, while the two men who followed kept a keen watch in the rear that their enemies might not come upon them unawares.

At last they entered a cavern of vast dimensions.

It was occupied by about a dozen of the fugitive insurgents, some lying on heaps of straw at the sides of the cave, others grouped in the centre around the carcass of a calf, which they were actually devouring uncooked.

These wretched beings had dragged their wounded comrades thither, and were endeavouring to nurse them at the risk of all starving together, for they dared not enter into the village for fear of the baron's myrmidons, who were on guard there.

Only by night did they steal from their asylum into the vicinity of their own homes to receive from their womenfolk such food as they could procure.

To-night it was only a calf they could get,

and they had driven it before them into the cave, and killed it.

Not daring to light a fire, they were forced to appease their hunger on the raw mass.

Ah! could they have slain the tyrant whose cruelties had driven them to this strait he had long since been cold in death.

A wan light pervaded this spectral scene, which came from some clefts in the side of the cave.

The day was dawning by this time, and the resplendent beams penetrated even to this gloomy den of horror and despair.

The men who supported Hereward laid him down among the other unfortunates who lined the cave, and when joined by their comrades, who started from their repast at the entrance of the procession, they gathered round the prostrate youth with looks of bitter though silent grief.

The Hindoo maid, unconscious of the curiosity and surprise which her presence excited, knelt down and began to bind up Hereward's wounds with strips torn from her veil, while Watt Slygreen, with bursting heart, poured a few drops of weak broth, which had been made for the invalid's special use, between his lips, and sought relief for his feelings by alternate endearments addressed to his master and abuse of his listeners.

"To think you should ever have come to this," groaned he. "What would your father say? Oh, my precious young master! Why, he used to sit on my arm and pull my whiskers, and here he is, cold, cold, cold! You thick-skulled owls, couldn't you have stuck better by your old baron's son than to let him come to this? You poor idiots, you lost vagabonds, what'll you do now that the last Kentigerna is gone, and the old Fox's claws is all that's left for you."

"He's not gone, surely?" cried the famished creatures, aroused from their own sorrows at this startling announcement to gaze conscience-smitten upon their last hope.

Some of the wounded ones even crawled out of their lairs to see for themselves.

"Yes, he is!—yes, yes!" groaned Watt, wiping his eyes on his velvet cap; "and you've nobody but yourselves to blame. If you had backed him, your own young baron, instead of running away like cowards, and leaving him in their grip, he might have been riding out of his own Tower gate to-day with a dozen squires of you behind him!"

Nothing would have induced Watt to believe in reality that his dear master was dead, but he thought his listeners required a salutary lesson for their conduct.

"Our own young baron—our master!" wailed they now, fully realizing what they had lost. "Oh, why didn't we know the night we mobbed him at the inn who he was? Isn't he enough like his father? Look at his brow, his eyes, his mouth! No, surely he isn't dead!"

"We've much to avenge, men," said Slygreen, becoming suddenly calm; "listen now to the tale of how Chastelard cheated your own good Baron Kentigorne out of his own. Henry Kentigorne only lived among you five years, didn't he? Well, when he left you wasn't it said that he had run off with a lady of birth in London, whose husband shot him in a duel, and that he died without one hair of his blood to rule the Tower but Lady Sybilla Kentigorne? It wasn't true, comrades; the baron was an honourable gentleman as ever lived, and wouldn't have forgotten it for any lady in the land. It was a fabrication of Vipont Chastelard's."

"We never believed ill of our baron," murmured the men. "We always loved him."

"Vipont Chastelard, the sneaking French hound, worked it all out," resumed the dwarf, gradually talking himself into a fury. "Baron Kentigorne was betrothed to his cousin, Lady Sybilla, and right well they loved each other, as you can remember, but Chastelard had his eye on her too, and he was bound not to be the loser in the race. So what did he do but induce the baron to go to London, where he got him into queer company, who dragged him, and made him sign the paper which bound him to the French East India Company as a common soldier; and when he came to himself wasn't he in a transport with a lot of unfortunate vagabonds, all bound like himself for the same place!"

Vehement imprecations from the men here interrupted him.

"Then," recounted Watt, "having got the baron hard and fast out of the way, what did he do but blacken his enemy with a scandal which wasn't true, and get Lady Sybilla to believe it! She would never have turned against her cousin and him as she thought in his grave if a vile woman paid by Chastelard hadn't come to her, calling herself one of the baron's victims, and given her what seemed to be proofs of the truth of the scandal about the lady. Poor Lady Sybilla was too proud to wear the willow for such a light o' love as he after that, and she married Vipont de Chastelard. She found out when too late what a villain she had for a husband, as old Jeffreys knows well, and though she never discovered her Henry's true fate she just pined into her grave a few weeks after Lucia was born."

"All this time Baron Kentigorne was working like a slave in the trenches, under the burning India sun, among a lot of French vagabonds; and, as his papers were all fairly made out and nobody took the trouble to listen for a moment to his story, he was soon fain to let it drop."

"But at last he escaped from his French slave-drivers, and went to the English consul with his story. And he would have been sent back to England in the first ship, to unmask Chastelard's plot, but, in the meantime, the natives rose, and, to pass away the time, he took charge of a company, and showed himself such a brave and dashing hussar that they made him a captain."

"Then he heard from a gentleman, who had lately come from England, that Lady Sybilla had married Chastelard, and so great was this shock to him that he lost heart for going home, and resolved to stay where fame was at his elbow. So he did, and married the commandant's only daughter in a few years, and became in time a general so brave that he was called 'The Hero of the East.' You see, comrades, how good blood will distinguish itself. Then Hereward was born, and, but for him, I don't believe the general would ever have thought of his possessions in England, for he liked India best because it had used him best. So he resolved that as soon as Master Hereward came of age he should confront the old fox in his Tower, and display the papers which would announce the true heir; and for this purpose he got a lawyer in Bengal to draw them up, and they were kept safely until just before the general died two years ago, when he gave them over to young master, who had two years to wait before his majority. And I was the only one among all his servants that he thought fit to be young master's squire—i.e., the long-necked hunchback! But you see it's all come to nothing; Master Hereward was reckless, and the papers have gone amissing—I'm much afraid into Chastelard's clutches, and here lies your young baron. Alas! alas!"

Watt broke short, and buried his face in his large, leathery hands, while his listeners stood round in every attitude betokening profound grief and disappointment.

As Slygreen's recent exploits require some explanation we will take this opportunity of giving it.

Having with one amazing leap escaped the soldiers

who would have imprisoned him with his master, Watt crawled out of sight among the sparse herbage of the cliff-side until his enemies had all disappeared, when he instantly set himself to work out Hereward's freedom.

By dint of prowling round the Tower he discovered from Miss Chastelard's maid, first that her mistress was very ill, secondly that Mr. Hereward had been conveyed to one of the dungeons, whither no one but the baron and La Mort could tell.

With this meagre information Watt ventured into the village and sought out Jeffreys, the keeper of "Kentigorne's Rest," who in old times had been a sort of squire to Baron Kentigorne when he was a gay young knight, and consequently must know more about the Tower than any other person in the village.

To him Watt poured out the whole story of Hereward's identity, and his present fate, and implored Jeffreys's help.

Jeffreys, it will be remembered, had had a wild suspicion upon first seeing the youth that he was Baron Kentigorne's son. He alone of all the baron's servants had mistrusted the tale of his death.

The woman who had carried to Lady Sybilla her infamous tale of Baron Kentigorne had lodged over night at the inn then just occupied by Jeffreys, and he had overheard enough of what had taken place between her and Vipont Chastelard, who visited her, to convince him that the story of the duel was false.

Since that time he had patiently and almost superstitiously looked for his master's return, and kept loyal in his heart to him.

When, therefore, Slygreen told his tale the old man was wild with excitement, and proved a ready friend as far as lay in his power.

He told of the dreadful vaults beneath the Tower where Chastelard was said to have frequently immured until they died of hunger those who strove to cross him, when he would hurl their bodies into the sea, and Watt had determined to discover if possible which cell had been selected for his master's tomb.

For two days he tried to obtain a certainty, but so fruitlessly that he would have been forced to abandon the search had not he met Indian friends at the inn, who, by their wonderful keenness, discovered that which he had failed to find.

Badoura, rocking in her little boat among the surf before the Tower, had seen that wan, pale object which crawled to the mouth of the orifice and slept from utter weakness.

She had flown back to the inn, ordered the construction of the rope ladder, and the result has been told.

Who then was this being of dark loveliness and devotion who had interested herself in Hereward's sad fortunes?

CHAPTER XVIII.

Now whether shall I fly to find relief?

What charitable hand will aid me now? *Rouse.*

THE weary day wore off. The invalids in the cave moaned and fretted with hunger and pain; their rough nurses had nothing to give them.

Hereward awoke from his trance and deliriously called for water.

The men turned away palely; in this flinty refuge not a drop was to be found. Until night should fall they dared not look elsewhere.

Badoura, frozen with anguish, watched him tossing on his couch of straw, gazing on their faces as if reproaching them with his sufferings.

At last Watt Slygreen determined to risk all for his dear master's sake, and ventured forth. In an hour he returned, with the flasks of cold water and a brace of water fowl, which he soon cooked for his master.

Two days passed—two weary days to the famishing inmates. The morning of the third broke damp and chilly, and the cliff was wrapped in fog.

Weary with fasting, the inmates of the cave were all asleep who could sleep, some would never waken more.

Many of the wounded had died and had been carried to a remote corner, where now they lay cold and stark, awaiting sepulture, which as yet their survivors dared not give them.

Hereward murmured feverishly, knowing nothing, and Badoura watched him tenderly.

Watt Slygreen, lying near his master, was hungrily gnawing at a bone, the flesh of which had long since been devoured; and old Seyd, propped in a sitting posture against the side of the cave, with his face turned towards his mistress, slept with folded arms.

All at once the chill atmosphere began to change to a pleasant warmth, and the sleepers breathed more heavily, revelling in the unaccustomed sense of comfort.

Badoura ceased to shiver, and her weary eyelids dropped drowsily.

Warmer yet grew the air as if a sunny beam were permeating through the cave; the fevered invalids began to toss uneasily.

Hereward moaned for water, Badoura started from her brief oblivion and looked around her wonderingly.

Watt's head had fallen forward and he snored luxuriously.

How sultry the air was.

Hereward's face flushed scarlet, his parched lips were gasping for breath.

Badoura poured some water between his lips and he ceased his efforts. Warmer than ever seemed the air as she put aside the flask; how strange and breathless.

There was a roaring faintly heard, and now and then a dull explosion—could it be the sea?

Hotter and hotter it became, while the beads of perspiration oozed out on the maiden's brow.

No marvel that the invalids moaned and tossed, and gasped aloud for water.

Oh, if Watt would only waken!

Badoura grew faint with fear; she put her hand upon the stone behind her, and a thrill of horror shook her very heart.

The wall was burning hot!

"Seyd Ally!" gasped the maiden, rushing to the old man, "awake! awake!"

He started up, looked about, and burst into a wild chattering.

Watt raised his huge, shaggy head from the floor, and wiped the great drops from his temples.

The next moment he bounded to his feet and was peering out of the crevice.

As he stirred the brushwood from the hole a blood-red glare flashed in, and Badoura uttered a wild, long shriek.

Up sprang the sleepers, gazing about them in horror and dismay.

"Heaven help us!" shouted Watt, running hither and thither frantically; "the whole mountain's afire, and we'll be roasted like chestnuts in the ashes! Run—run for your lives, comrades, for the inner caves!"

In poured the pale, blue smoke—hot, choking, acrid. The wretched invalids tried to drag themselves from the glowing sides of the cavern such as could, such as could not moaned continually, and foamed at the mouth.

The roaring which had mingled before with the roar of the sea now drowned it, and the same loud reports increased in frequency and distinctness.

The rocks above their heads were cracking with the intense heat.

"Save him! Save the sahib!" shrieked Badoura, in her own language, which only Watt and Seyd understood.

Upon her loud cry came a volley of musketry, and some bullets whizzed through the crevices, and rattled on the stones.

Chastelard's soldiers had discovered the retreat of the fugitives and were determined to burn them out. The thick moss and brushwood which clothed the cliff, now dry as tinder from long drought, had proved a ready ally to their fiendish scheme.

The mountain glowed like a red-hot furnace.

Wild was the confusion, desperate the struggle to escape this awful end.

The insurgents, weak with long fasting, gathered brief superhuman strength, and began to carry the wounded one by one into the interior passage which led down to the sea.

First of all they conveyed thither their young chief, Hereward; while Badoura, wild eyed and desperate, flew on before, to see that no stealthy foe had cut off their escape.

Then Watt followed, dragging the old Gentoo, who had fainted in the smoke.

Then two insurgents carrying a third, who, frothing at the nostrils and mouth, threw up his arms and expired.

Where were the rest?

An explosion which shook the mountain to its centre—a rush of falling earth and stones—a few anguished shrieks—a yell of triumph was the answer. It was the carnival of death.

The survivors looked on each other with convulsed faces.

Who were saved?

Hereward, Badoura, Watt, and the Hindoo, and two men.

Only six of the nineteen who had been joined in one confraternity so long together.

Ah! here came one more—a great, powerful fellow, whose countenance, blackened and scarred by smoke and fire, was shrivelled to a mummy parchment, whose clothes were torn and licked off his shoulders by the all-devouring flames.

Where were the loiterers?

Don't ask! The cave had fallen in—the beds of straw had caught fire—the wounded had been crushed—charred!

He had dragged three into the safer passage, and had gone for a fourth, when a mighty rock fell upon them all.

Oh, don't think of that! only think of vengeance on the tyrant of Kentigern Tower!

They hurried through the passage, gained the boat, which was moored in its subterranean creek, and, heavily weighted as it was, managed to steal undiscovered out to sea, and away from the fatal spot.

(To be continued.)

MYSTERY OF THE HAUNTED GRANGE.

CHAPTER XX.

"FORGIVE you," Polly repeated, and the hard ring died out of her voice and a great pathos followed. "You ask me to forgive you! Well, Mr. Fane, I will try. It is not that I care for you much—no, Allan Fane, I know now I never cared for you, but you have hurt me all the same. I shall never have the same faith in mankind again—I seem to have lost my youth in the moment it became mine. You have acted badly to me—badly! badly!"—the fire that can only blaze in blue eyes flashed from hers now—"but I will try and forgive you if I can. Take your ring!"

"I cannot, oh, Polly!"

She flung it at his feet in a sudden tempest of fury—the quick fury of a very child.

"Don't ever call me Polly—how dare you do it! Take your ring this moment or I will walk straight out of this house up to the Priory, and tell Miss Hantton every word! And your books, and your drawings—here they are—everything you ever gave me, except the flowers, and those I threw into the fire an hour ago. Take them, I command you, Mr. Fane!"

What could he do but obey? He was afraid of her in that hour—afraid of her even if she had not known his secret, but that made him her abject slave.

He took the ring, he took the little package, and a very sorry figure the conquering hero cut in the hour of his triumph. It struck Polly's sense of the ludicrous. In all tragedies do not the elements of the ridiculous linger?

She burst out laughing, with the passionate tears still in her eyes.

"You look like a colporteur going his rounds. Don't let me detain you an instant longer, Mr. Fane; Miss Hantton may want you. You have had your sport; and a verdant little country girl has helped while away a summer holiday, so there is no need to linger now; I have congratulated you, and given you your belongings back, and now the sooner we say good-bye the better."

She made him a bow—Miss Hantton could never have surpassed it in grace or insolence—and walked straight out of the room. And Allan Fane left the house, and coming to the garden well flung his bundle of books to the bottom. He might have flung the ring after, but diamond rings are expensive, so he put it in his pocket, and went back to his high-born betrothed.

An hour after he placed it on her finger, and Diana deigned to say she thought it "rather pretty."

Duke, from his upper window, saw the young man come and go, and waited anxiously for supper-time and a pretext to go downstairs.

Rosanna's afflicted molar also gave over aching about that time, and the brother and sister met in the small dining-room.

Polly had got tea—the table was set, the toast buttered, the lamp lit, the fire in the kitchen stove burning cheerily. The girl herself was quite white, quite still, very silent, and the blue eyes looked weary and heavy. She was more womanly than Duke had ever seen her, but he sighed as he looked at her.

"I suppose she's better so," he thought; "quiet, and young-lady like, but I think I'd sooner have my wild little girl playing Fisher's Hornpipe on the fiddle."

Rosanna noticed the pale cheeks, the silence, and the lack of appetite.

"That child is growing bilious," the elder lady remarked, with her strong glare fixed on shrinking Polly, "or about to have an attack of jaundice. People always turn green and fall into low spirits before jaundice. Do you feel a general sinking all over, Polly, and an inclination to cry?"

Polly looked at Duke and burst out laughing—rather hysterically though.

"I don't feel the least inclined to cry, Rosanna, thank you," she said, defiantly, and her eyes had a dry, fearless glitter. "I know what you want, but you shan't victimize me. I won't take herb-tea, or

hot baths, or vegetable pills, or any of the nostrums you like to dose poor mortals with. Let me alone, Rosanna."

She left the room as she spoke. Duke looked wistfully after her.

"Let her alone, Rosanna," he repeated, "it's the best thing you can do. I know what's the matter, and herb-tea won't cure her. She is fallen into low spirits, as you remarked, and I'll take her to see our funny new piece at the theatre to-night, to freshen her up a bit."

It still rained, but Polly never minded rain, and taking Duke's arm went with him to the little Speck-haven theatre. She had delighted in the theatre hitherto, before Lord Montalien and his guests had come down to disturb the current of her serene life, but to-night she looked at the glittering stage-lamps, the tinselled dresses, the rouged faces, with apathetic eyes.

"The Prince of Pipes and Boresbad" was a very fat and funny potentate indeed, who kept the Speck-havenites in roars for two hours, but the figures on the stage flitted before the young girl's gaze like puppets in a magic lantern. She sat with her hands folded, no light in her eyes, no colour on her cheeks, her thoughts far away—far away.

Once, and once only, she aroused herself. Eliza Long, taken to the play by the haberdasher's young man, watched that altered face with vicious delight; and when the curtain was down made her way over to Polly's seat for a little friendly whisper.

"How d'ye do, Polly? Isn't it awfully droll? I've been dying to see you, do you know, to find out if the news I've heard is true. But, of course, it can't—being so took up as he was with you—I mean Mr. Allan Fane, the artist. William Shaunks, that's one of the footmen at the Priory, you know, told me he was engaged to Miss Hantton."

Polly lifted her quiet eyes to the other's spiteful ones, and answered, slowly:

"I don't know, Eliza—I'm not acquainted with Mr. William Shaunks, footman at the Priory—my acquaintance doesn't lie in the servants' hall. Is he the tall footman, or the very tall footman who has been paying attention to you since the family came down? As to his information, that sort of people are generally pretty correct in their news regarding their masters. In this instance he happens to be entirely right. Mr. Fane was at our house in a friendly way as usual this afternoon, and we had quite a chat over the matter. He is engaged to Miss Hantton, and they are going to Italy for the summer, and will be married next May in London. Is there anything else you would like to know, Eliza, because I might inquire of Mr. Fane, who would probably be even more correct than Mr. Calves—no, Shaunks—the footman!"

Then Miss Mason turned her back deliberately upon Miss Long, who returned to her seat worsted, as she always was in an encounter with Polly, but rejoicing nevertheless.

Meanwhile at the Priory its lord had arrived by the seven-o'clock train, bringing with him a short, sombre, stout man, with a legal look. He was legal; he was Mr. Gripper, of the firm Gripper and Grinder, Lincoln's Inn, London; and he and Lord Montalien were closeted together on important business for some time after their arrival.

Mr. Gripper emerged at last, and was shown to his room—he was staying over night it seemed; and Mr. Fane was announced and shown into the library, where his lord sat.

The curtains were drawn, the lamps shone, while outside the rain fell and the black June night shut down.

My lord sat in his great arm-chair, near a writing-table, staring in a daze of sort of way at the lamp before him. His usually placid face wore a strange expression, half perplexity, half dismay.

Mr. Fane, too, as the servant ushered him in, looked pale and strangely disturbed, and both were so absorbed in their own thoughts that neither noticed the expression of the other's face.

Mr. Fane took a seat opposite, looking singularly agitated indeed.

I am given to understand by masculine friends who have done the business that asking the consent of a young lady's papa or guardian is much more disagreeable than asking the young lady herself.

Mr. Fane had got through his part with Miss Hantton glibly enough, and this asking Lord Montalien was the merest matter of form, still, like Macbeth's "Amen," the words "stuck in his throat."

Lord Montalien wrenched his thoughts away from his own absorbing topic with an evident effort, and listened with bland staidity to the young man's stammering words.

"Wish to marry Diana, and ask my consent? My dear boy, my consent is quite unnecessary, as you know. Very correct of you, though, to come to me. Of course I have long foreseen this, and as Diana

seems pleased I sincerely offer you my congratulations. There's some trifling disparity of years, I am aware, but you know the Scotch have a saying that for the wife to be the elder brings luck to the house."

Mr. Fane said nothing, but he looked rather rueful. He was thinking he would rather dispense with a little of the luck and have the "trifling disparity" on the other side.

"Then I have your approval, my lord," he said, rising, "and may consider all things settled?"

"You have my approval and best wishes. Diana is certainly old enough to act for herself"—again the young man winced—"and her income, as you must know, dies with her. By-the-bye, Fane," and he changed his voice with abruptness—"you mixed a good deal among the people at the fête the other day, and may know—was there a man by the name of—of Trowel—no Mason," referring to his tablets, "here upon that occasion?"

Allan Fane started, more nervelessly than before.

"There is a man by the name of Mason living about three miles from here. Mason is a common name however; there may be many Masons in Speck-haven."

"So there may. The fellow I mean is called Marmaduke Mason, and has a maiden sister, Rosamond—Rosamond—no, Rosanna," referring to the tablets again—"by occupation a scene-painter."

"That is the man, my lord. Yes, I know him."

"And he has a ward—she passes for his cousin, a girl of sixteen—called Polly."

Had Lord Montalien not been so engrossed by his tablets and questions he must have noticed Mr. Fane's greatly disturbed face.

"Yes, my lord, there is a Polly Mason!"

"That's the girl!"

His lordship shut up his tablets with a triumphant snap.

"Now what's she like? I'll lay my life she has red hands, a Lincolnshire accent, and a turned-up nose!"

"You would lose your stake, then, my lord. Miss Mason is," with something of an effort he said this, "one of the very handsomest girls I ever saw in the whole course of my life."

"Ah! is she?" his lordship sighed, resignedly; "all the worse for me. An heiress and ward with a snub nose would be trouble enough, but a ward with a Grecian nasal appendage and eighty thousand pounds to her fortune! Ah, well, my life has been one long martyrdom—this is only the last straw that very likely will break the camel's back!"

Allan Fane looked at the speaker with a face of ghastly wonder.

"My lord," he said, "I don't understand. Polly Mason is no heiress—she is this scene-painter's poor relation—brought up out of charity."

"My good fellow," Lord Montalien said, plaintively, "she's nothing of the kind. She is my ward, and she has eighty thousand pounds at this moment deposited in the funds for her benefit. No, don't look so imploringly—it's too long a story to tell you now. There's the dressing-bell—you shall all hear it at dinner."

He arose. Allan Fane quitted the room, and went up to his own. He did not seek his affianced—he was agast with wonder and alarm. What did it mean? Eighty thousand pounds and Polly Mason!

The great bell clanging high up in the windy turrets, at half past seven, informed Speckhaven and its inhabitants, that my lord and his family were about to dine.

Lord Montalien took advantage of a few minutes before going in to dinner, and presented his congratulations to his cousin Diana on this interesting episode in her life.

Mr. Gripper brought up the rear of the dinner procession with Guy, and was introduced to the other people around the table.

"He doesn't look like the harbinger of romance or a fairy godfather, or anything of the kind," Lord Montalien remarked, "nevertheless he is. He comes to inform a little country girl of sixteen that she is my ward and heiress of eighty thousand pounds. Do any of you beside Fane know her? Her name at present is Polly Mason!"

Lord Montalien glanced around his own board, and was somewhat surprised at the sensation the very commonplace name of a very commonplace young person created.

Diana Hantton started, and turned an icy look upon her lover—that gentleman fixed his eyes upon his plate and seemed slowly petrifying; Guy suppressed a whistle and looked unutterable things; and my Lady Charteris's spoon dropped into her soup-plate with a clash; Francis Earls court was eagerly interested; and Sir Fane, after one steady look at his pallid and startled wife, waited with composure for the peer's next words.

"Well," said his lordship, "you all look as if you

knew her. Being so interested before I begin, how will you be thrilled before I have finished? Shall I go back and begin at the beginning with this romance of real life?"

Lord Montalien pushed away his soup, leaned back in his chair, and began to "thrill" his hearers.

"It's just fourteen years ago, on the second of last April, that I started on my return voyage to England after my long absence. There was only one passenger on board whom I found worth the trouble of talking to, and he was a noble-looking fellow—splendidly proportioned—tall and moulded like an athletic Apollo, with a face full of intelligence and self-repression. Self-repression in man or woman I like. This man looked as if he had a history—he puzzled me—and to be puzzled means to be interested. I was interested in Mr. Robert Hawkeley; and on the last day of our voyage he told me his story, mentioning no names, not his own—the name he went by on ship-board, even then, I suspected, at times, to be assumed.

"He was an Englishman, the only son of a yeoman farmer, but had been educated as a gentleman. He had been two or three years before secretary to a man in Staffordshire. I think he said this man had a daughter or niece, I forget which, a great heiress, a great beauty, and six years his junior. She was home from school, romantic as all girls home from school are, and she met my handsome secretary. What was the consequence? Why, they fell in love with each other, of course—ran away to Scotland, and were married!"

My lord paused.

The fish had been placed upon the table, and he took his fork and refreshed himself with a little turbot.

Over the face of Sir Vane Charteris a strange, dark change was passing, and over the face of my lady a deathly whiteness had come.

She leaned a little forward, her lips apart, her great eyes dilated—heedless of her husband, of her dinner, of the people who looked at her. What story was this she was hearing?

Lord Montalien complacently set it all down to his own "thrilling" powers of narration, and placidly went on:

"Well, those two foolish, unfortunate, happy young lovers kept their secret for four months; then the truth came out, and there was the deuce to pay. Little missy was spirited away; my handsome secretary, through some nefarious plot on the part of the guardian, was found guilty of robbing his employer of money and jewels, and obliged to quit England.

"Now, two years after, he had made a home and a competence, and he was returning to seek out his wife and take her back to that new world. We parted on the quay. As we shook hands I made him promise that if ever, in any way, I could serve him, he would command me. I liked the lad greatly—his was a brave and loyal nature, I truly believe.

"Well, fourteen years passed, and I heard nothing more of, or from, Mr. Robert Hawkeley until yesterday—not until yesterday, when Mr. James Gripper here called upon me and informed me I was solicited to become guardian of a young lady, heiress of eighty thousand pounds, and prosecuting me with a letter containing farther particulars. The letter had come all the way from San Francisco, and it was from my old acquaintance, Hawkeley. He recalled the promise I had voluntarily made, and in the most manly and frank way asked me to fulfil it now by becoming the guardian and protector of his only child. He told me his story in brief from the time of our parting on the Liverpool quay.

"He had found his wife—the wife on whose fidelity he said to me on shipboard he could have staked his existence—how do you think? At the altar—the bride of another—a man to whom she had been engaged before he had met her, of her own rank and station.

"There are more Enoch Ardens in the world than Mr. Tennyson's hero. He left England again without speaking a word to her, and he has never returned since. But, by some mystery which he does not explain, he discovered that his wife had given birth to a child—a daughter—five months after his first flight from England, which child, at two years old, she had given to a scene-painter, named Mason, and his sister to bring up.

"He found this child, begged the Mason people to take every care of her, and they should be one day well rewarded. That day has now come. In the Californian gold mines this man has made a fortune—eighty thousand pounds he has deposited, to be his lucky little daughter's dowry, and I am appointed her guardian. He asks me to place her at a school where she will be educated in a manner befitting the station in life she is destined to fill; and he says that she may drop the cognomen of 'Polly Mason' for her own rightful name of Paulina Lisle. From this, therefore, it is plain that instead of his name being Hawkeley it is Robert Lisle!"

Lord Montalien paused—not that he had finished, by any means, with his interesting story—but at that moment, with a gasping cry, Lady Charteris fell forward, her head on the table.

All started up; her husband lifted her in his arms, almost as ghastly as herself. She had fainted dead away.

(To be continued.)

THE GIPSY'S ORDEAL.

CHAPTER XXII.

CARLOS knew nothing of the terrible accident to Inez, for it had taken place and been followed by her long and serious illness some months before his arrival from his island exile.

He reached Madrid to ascertain that the company had been there, and gone, and that the girl had been hurt and had disappeared from public view. He resolved to find the strolling company if possible.

After travelling through the interior of Spain for weeks, he one evening learned that a company of equestrians and gymnasts had recently passed through the town where he had been stopping for a day or two, and that they had opened their exhibition at a neighbouring village, five or six miles distant, whither he directed his way on the following morning.

Arrived at the hotel where the manager lodged, he solicited an interview, and was asked to walk up.

"You are the manager of the company now performing here, I believe, señor?" asked Carlos, on entering the room.

"Yes," said the man, pompously. "Do you seek an engagement? You are quite young yet."

Having made the discovery that the manager was the same who had been the "guardian" of Inez, a thought struck the boy instantly upon this suggestion, and he answered, promptly:

"Yes, señor. I would like to obtain an engagement."

"What can you do? What is your line?"

"Almost anything—in a general way."

"Do you ride? How old are you?"

"Oh, yes, señor; and I am not nineteen yet."

"Can you fence?"

"They tell me I fence tolerably well."

"You ride and fence. What else can you do?"

asked the manager, calculatingly.

"At wrestling, boxing, quoit-pitching, or with the broadsword, I am a match for most men I meet, señor."

"In most of the accomplishments you mention I am an adept—an expert in many. Come! Will you give me taste of your quality, youngster?"

"At what, señor?" asked the lad, promptly.

"Anything, in a friendly way. I am in good practice, having lost my chief man some weeks ago, who fell ill, and I am forced to do his work. If you can perform as you say you can I will engage you at once," said the manager.

The chief man he had just alluded to had left his employ because he hadn't paid him his salary for seven weeks.

"I am just off a long sea-voyage from up the Mediterranean," said the youth, in an apologetic way, "and am really not in practice like yourself; still I have no objection to try a bout with you. But you will of course beat me at these exercises. However, we must not be rough—eh?"

"Oh, brisk, briskly, boy! Give and take. I want to see what you can do. For myself I have no concern; and I am not partial to boys' play—it doesn't take with the public. Vigorous action, sharp work—the display of power, agility, muscle, adroitness, will alone answer the tastes of the Spaniards you know. So to commence with," concluded the manager, handing the boy a pair of boxing-gloves, "suppose we see how you are up in the 'manly art of self-defence,' as we term it. I understood you to say that you can spar. Eh?"

"That is my weak point I confess," replied Carlos, taking the gloves, and thrusting his hands into them. "Still we can try them."

"Ah, yes," responded the manager, who was quite "at home" with the gloves, and could spar very well.

He thought the young man was trying to "crawl off," from his remarks, and he made up his mind that he would punch his head in a "friendly way" to begin with, and without farther parley.

"Come, señor! Be on your guard!" he cried.

The boy stood gallantly up to the foot-mark on the instant, having previously thrown off his outer coat.

Carlos really was not then in practice, especially in the science of fisticuffs, but he took his chances. He had been three years previously an "ungly customer" for most of his antagonists.

Now he owed this gentleman one for his former

contemptuous treatment of him when he first became acquainted with Inez, whose "guardian" he pretended to be.

After a little dodging and sparring and by-play the manager fell back, allowed the boy to rap at him a moment, then he struck out sharply, heavily, quickly, and frequently in the assault.

But to his surprise he couldn't get a single blow in upon his adversary's head or chest, strike where or how he might.

Suddenly he got a tap in the face, which "made him see stars" for an instant, and greatly enraged as well as astonished him.

Then, turning upon Carlos furiously, he proposed to punish the youngster for this temerity, and came at him with furious vigour.

Carlos saw that he was angered, and thought he would put an end to this, for he could handle this man readily, notwithstanding all his talk.

After giving and receiving for a moment the boy backed away, in a circle, around the room, let him come, guarded himself splendidly from the rapidly falling blows of the manager, turned, attacked him, feinted, and, watching his opportunity, threw in a stinging blow flat upon his face, which sent the doughty manager clean across the room upon his back into the farthest corner, while the blood started copiously from his nostrils and mouth, and Carlos didn't know but he had killed him, though it had been done with the gloves.

The manager lay in the corner for an instant, as if he had been kicked by one of his ring-horses. Then, rising, he threw off his gloves, went to the washstand to cool off, and said:

"You spar well, señor, at all events."

"I am quite out of practice, I assure you," replied the lad, quickly. "I haven't had the gloves on for two years and over until to-day. But I can soon work into it with a little daily practice now."

"You won't practise with me daily, I think," remarked the manager, grimly.

The boy smiled good naturedly as he reflected how he had thus had the opportunity to give this man one off the old account.

But he hadn't done with him yet by any means. This was only his beginning.

"Now, señor," he said as the manager wiped away the blood from his face, "I see you have foils at hand."

He took down a pair of these from the wall, and gracefully presented the man with their handles.

"Choose, señor," added Carlos.

The late "guardian" of Inez did so, and stood on garde at the word. He was a good swordsman, and he knew it.

Now he would pay this fellow off roundly for the thump he had just given him in the face!

As it they went, and Carlos drove his man about the great, old room until he was giddy in his efforts to parry the cuts and thrusts he played at him, right and left, up and down, over and over, and, having run him back to the window, with one active wrench of his powerful wrist he caught the manager's foil at the hilt, and hurled it spinning from his hold straight out of the open casement into the courtyard below as he struck his own buttoned point sharply upon his adversary's ribs.

"You fence remarkably well, young man," said his foe, respectfully.

"Now, señor! once more!" said Carlos, warming from his exercise. "Now!"

Before the blown manager could fairly recover his breath the boy caught two broadswords from the wall, handing him one, and cried:

"On guard, señor."

Cut and thrust and lunge followed out and parry and clash.

The youngster now went at the manager with a rush, and banged and slashed him fearfully, though he defended himself to the best of his skill.

Up and down, over and under, right and left, again, sidewise, and perpendicular, giving him no time or chance to return a single point—he slashed and beat him across and around the room till he was thoroughly winded, and panted like a run-down bull, in the ring; then, raising his danger, he brought down a fearful blow upon his opponent's sword, and crashed it through and through, when it fell from his gripe as if struck out of his hand by a stroke of lightning.

"Young man, you are an expert with the broadsword!" said the manager, with emphasis.

"Now, señor, one more taste of my quality," said the boy.

Before he knew what was coming next the young athlete seized the stout manager round the waist, and told him he would show him what he could do at wrestling.

They clutched, and Carlos caught his man at hip and thigh in an instant. The boy's grip was that of a giant!

They struggled, heaved, and wrenched, then

strained, and tripped, and writhed, for both were powerful men; and Carlos jerked the manager roughly forward, hurled him quivering to the side, and, catching him by main strength upon the hip, he lifted and threw him sprawling upon his back at the farthest end of the room with a force that knocked the remaining breath he had clean out of his quivering body.

The manager staggered to his feet and into his chair.

"Enough," he said. "You are a born wrestler, senior."

"I am no pretender, senior," said Carlos, coolly. Refreshments were ordered, and the young man was engaged forthwith.

"What is your name?" asked the manager.

"Ilphonso," said the boy, quickly, at a venture. "Ilphonso!" exclaimed the other. "What!—the gipsy?"

"No," replied Carlos. "Ilphonso is my name. I am not a gipsy."

He was only the son of the gipsy. But he said nothing of this. The manager had heard of the father, and knew him to be an extraordinary athlete years before.

The late "guardian" of the beautiful Inez was satisfied perfectly—doubly satisfied. He had personally got all he desired at the hands of the gentleman, and he had now got a fresh "card," indeed, for his exhibition. He would make the most of this fellow!

On the next day the following appeared upon posters in the streets of the town:

"Great Attraction!—Splendid Achievements! Young Ilphonso, The Boy Gladiator!—The Unapproachable Athlete! His First Appearance here! A Youthful Wonder! In Horsemanship, Sparring, Fencing, Broadsword Exercise, Wrestling," etc., etc."

The arena was crammed with spectators, and the "Boy Gladiator" made his *entrée* in public, in the ring, on the following evening, according to this announcement.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE exhibitions given by the company in the place where the flamboyantly announced performances of this "wonder of the age," the "Boy Gladiator," were to come off, were held in an immense tent borne with them for the purpose, enclosing an ample circle, and affording accommodation for a large audience—whenever it could be got together—which, latterly in their experience, had not been the case—for the manager had been without any "drawing cards" of late, until he now alighted on this promising young athlete, who, he had expressly stipulated with, should conduct his little "practising" with any one but him hereafter!

A run was made for the tent next day, and, an hour before the time named for commencing the evening's operations, every seat in the enclosure had its occupant. The passages were all thronged!

Never had the covetous manager seen such an audience since the palmy days of the famous equestrienne, "Inez the Beautiful."

And this display reminded him of the good old days of that notable beauty and dashing lady rider, out of whose magnificent and daring exploits in the ring he had made—and spent, alack!—a fortune!

The mob crammed the arena, and long before the time for opening they had worked themselves up to a fever of excitement in anticipation of the great treat they were to enjoy, as the Spanish people usually do at these "sports of the ring."

Carlos had not made his appearance even in the "green-room" yet.

The manager was there, however, and he had already informed his performers who were to take part in the forthcoming "exercises of the evening" that each must put his best foot foremost now with this youngster, for he had tried him and they would find him no mean antagonist to cope with.

It wanted but fifteen minutes to the opening scene—which was to be a general display of horse and actors; in which the boy—who was the "star" of the evening—was not included.

He hadn't arrived yet.

The manager got uneasy. The company fidgeted. If the boy didn't appear there would be a scene not down in the programme, for a certainty. And they all knew it.

Time was called. The bell rang. The fine, showy horses and gaudy-looking performers burst into the arena, and the performance commenced.

But the "Boy Gladiator" had not yet appeared in the green-room.

The first scene closed, the horses and actors came out of the ring, and the boy entered the green-room at the same moment.

"Stage is waiting!" exclaimed the manager as he gladly welcomed the young man. "You have but five minutes to dress in, and the audience are getting impatient."

"Your first scene has but this moment concluded," said Carlos, quietly. "I am always in time, as you will find, senior, when you know me better."

Throwing off his cloak, he appeared before the gladdened eyes of the excited manager in an elegantly appointed riding-suit of green and gold, which he had procured during the day.

"Ring up for the boy!" shouted the manager as he looked upon the handsome, stalwart form of his "star" card.

And a moment afterward the "Boy Gladiator" dashed into the great arena, upon two finely caparisoned horses, trained to perform together—the elegant rider standing erect, with one foot upon the saddle of each animal, amid a salvo of applause that echoed to the heavens.

It was a great hit—this performance! Never had the audience beheld such rare skill in horsemanship as this boy exhibited. He rode in all sorts of positions, like an old stager; now posing in every phase of classical attitude like a statue; now on both feet, now sideways, sitting; now on his back, and at last on his head, with feet in the air—first on one horse, then on the other, and finally, at break-neck speed, standing upon the very necks of both his foaming chargers, the boy dashed round and out of the circle, while the audience roared themselves hoarse with their wild yells of "Bravo! Bravura! Bravissimo!" and "Encore! Encore! Encore!!"

But Carlos didn't see the "encore" part of that performance!

He came back, bowed gracefully, placed his hand to his breast, and retired.

The performance went on.

The vaulting, the ground and lofty tumbling, the somersets, the clown tricks, the trapeze, were gone through with, and the other riders concluded their creditable efforts in the usual way; but all was tame and stale in comparison with the daring feats accomplished by the boy.

Now, rested and refreshed, he entered the arena once more amid the ringing plaudits of the vast crowd, to give them a taste of his quality with the three famous athletes of the corps—in sparring, fencing, and the broadsword exercises.

He drew on his gloves and stood in the centre of the ring, attired in a close-fitting, fresh-coloured suit of silk tights, which displayed his massive and elegant muscular form to wondrous advantage. He looked the manly gladiator to the very life.

The first man who confronted him was a graceful and skilful pugilist, considerably heavier than Carlos in frame, and was known as an expert in the art of self-defence.

They shook hands formally and went at it in earnest.

The boy soon got the measure of this man—who quickly found that the youngster could "take and give" in a style that he had never yet been accustomed to in his ten years' experience in the ring. He couldn't strike him—anyhow, anywhere.

The boy came down upon him, pell-mell, whacking him right and left, knocking straight through his guard, and following up his blows as if given with a steam-worked hammer, on head, and front, and neck, until he was utterly exhausted, and out of wind; when the boy drew off, and planted a straight left-hander between the pugilist's eyes, which sent him reeling to earth, and knocked him clean out of time, amid the shrieks, and hoots, and yells of the crazy rabble!

He got up, bowed to the audience, and retired.

He had had enough of the youngster.

"Encore! Encore!" screamed the mob.

The second gymnast entered.

They shook hands. At it they went.

This fellow was a stout, wiry-framed man, and could stand punishment bravely—and did; for Carlos did his best, and knocked him right and left, and now upon his haunches; and up and down, again—and finally with a ringer at the side of his head, with that same "left-hander" which had finished his able predecessor, this plucky gentleman went to earth as if he had been stricken down with a sledge-hammer—and he was disposed of; while the roar of the multitude went up in thundering plaudits for the boy again, and his second discomfited antagonist slunk away, reeling and staggering from the arena.

"Encore! More! Encore!"

Then came the rapier exercise, at which his foe was nowhere.

Carlos hit him again and again, and quickly wrenched his weapon dextrously from his hand, and disarmed him by tossing his sword over his head into the air. He was done.

Then came the last of his performances as announced for that evening. This was his sham combat with his favourite weapon—the broadsword. With this the boy was "at home."

His competitor was a good one, the very best that Carlos had ever met, in the ring or elsewhere. But

the boy had made his fame, and he didn't intend to sacrifice or mar it now.

They met.

The man found he was dealing with a master of this heavy weapon. Never had he encountered such a foe as was this stripling. They crossed, and clashed, and cut, and hacked away at each other right valiantly, now single-handed, now both hands each. The gymnast, perspiring with his unwonted efforts, lunged out, and cross-cut, carte, and tierce followed upon cut and tierce and guard; but not one mistake did this young gladiator make in this busy bout.

Steady, cool, firm, adroit in every parry, and quick, certain, powerful in every advance, the boy kept his antagonist at bay or pressed him to the wall as the swords rang and clinked together, and the streams of fire shot from the shining blades in that sharp and slashing encounter, while the great tent rang with deafening applause at the consummate skill of these combatants.

Twice the boy had been touched slightly, and thrice had he palpably hit his stalwart opponent, when the latter made savage play and came thundering at the lad to finish the game and win a final triumph over the lauded favourite in that ring.

But Carlos was wary every time. He received the fierce onslaught bravely and coolly. His foe was worthy of his steel, but he began to falter. He had fought too fast, and Carlos knew it, for his keen, quick eye had noticed every movement of his foe, and had watched every breath he drew in that long, hard-fought contest.

And, halting for a moment, the boy stood knee to knee with the gigantic gymnast for an instant, then he rushed upon him with all his herculean strength aroused, and bore him back, and on, and down upon his knee, and, crashing his sword at the hilt, the boy cracked him on the crown with the flat of his weapon and sent him staggering heels over head flat upon the floor of the ring, utterly used up, amid peal on peal of the wildest exclamations that ever went up from the lungs of a delighted auditory.

For an instant the gymnast was stunned, but Carlos did not intend to harm him, and hadn't.

He rose gracefully, acknowledged the defeat, and the two gladiators left the arena arm-in-arm, to the farther delight of the crazy mob.

The entertainment was concluded; the fame of the "Boy Gladiator" was established. The manager was in raptures. He announced a repetition of the same performances for the following night—and audience and actors went home at a late hour in high glee.

The manager came out after making his announcement to congratulate his new "card" upon his brilliant success.

But the boy had disappeared. He did not see him that night again.

Carlos went to his quiet, out-of-the-way hotel, sent back his borrowed dresses and went to bed.

Next day he met one of the company by appointment and learned from him something of the treatment which this doughty manager had extended towards Inez, and especially where and how he had left her when the scheming, dissolute, ungrateful scoundrel had quitted Madrid, and he made up his mind what he would do next.

But he was very quiet and very cool about it. He said nothing of his purpose, but he resolved that he had made his first and last appearance in that ring under that management.

He had learned what he desired to know, for the present, of the probable whereabouts of Inez, whom he had got track of, he thought, and he would proceed to find her at once.

Before he left town, however, he intended to have a brief interview with the gentleman who had engaged him for his arena "at his own figure, whatever it might be," and get from him some farther light, if he could, regarding his friend Inez.

Before evening Carlos met the manager in his own hotel apartment.

This is what followed upon that interesting interview.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE success of the new "card" of the equestrian manager had been wonderful, and the "Boy Gladiator" proved himself all that the fulsome posters declared him to be.

Tickets for the second representation by the "Boy Gladiator" were in rare demand next day, and before night every seat had been engaged, and cards of admission were at a premium.

The crowd gathered early, and long before the time for commencing the exercises the great tent was crowded again, as upon the first appearance of this astonishing youth—only more completely, if possible—for the boy's name had spread like wild-fire in the past thirty-six hours in that excitable and sport-loving community, and the throng that attended upon this second performance was immense.

Many of those who were present on the first night were there again, and to these were added many strangers from a distance, whose the old and the fresh-starting posters had been freely circulated for two days.

Carlos kept himself pretty quiet during the day. He had had another private interview with the old member of the company who knew Inez, and he had given him some instructions as to the treatment the young girl had received at the manager's hands first and last.

"But," said the old actor, "my bread and butter are concerned here, and you mustn't allude to me in any way as knowing anything of the ring-master's affairs. I shall lose my situation, you see, at once. Still, I will say that he never gave sweet little Inez her due, and at the end I know he neglected and deserted her."

"The man is a brute!" said the boy, warmly. "So you say, senior, who can afford to talk in this manner. I can't. I'm poor and dependent on him, you see. I wish I could."

And the old actor grated his teeth sharply.

"Inez is in Leganes, you said?"

"Yes, senior—near Madrid."

"I think," said Carlos, "I will go to Leganes. If he has injured a hair of that girl's head, woe be to him!"

Just at evening Carlos called at the manager's hotel and was at once shown up to his apartment—the same room where the boy had given him "a taste of his quality."

The manager was all smiles to his new "card."

"Ah, Senior Ilphonso!" he exclaimed, "come in. Glad to see you. Where d'ye keep yourself all day? A success—a right royal success, my boy!" he continued, gleefully. "You did finely, and fulfilled the largest expectations. You must go with us to Madrid. We will show you before the cream of the nobility. You shall make your fortune."

"And yours, senior," said the boy, drily. Carlos tarried but a few minutes.

It was quite dark. Evening had set in—and already the crowd had collected at the tent, cramming it to its utmost capacity.

Carlos determined upon his course early in the day. He took no farther interest in the show. He had his plans.

The manager knew it was near the time when he must repair to the arena, and so he said again:

"A grand success last night, my boy. And there will be another to-night—greater than the first, if possible, though that was good enough. But don't delay, you know. You must not keep us waiting. We must find you if tardy, you know," added the business-like manager, with a show of discipline in his talk; "that is the way we treat 'em all—fine 'em, and dock their pay if they're late. That's the way I always did with even the popular Donna Inez when she pouted and hung back as she sometimes did," continued the talkative manager.

"Donna Inez," said the boy, quickly. "Do you speak of the former noted young equestrienne?"

"Yes, senior; the finest lady rider, and the best-paying card ever seen in Spain—for a while," said the man.

This was precisely the subject which Carlos wished introduced at this interview, but he hardly knew how to open it to avoid suspicion on this man's part.

"You know the Donna Inez then?" asked the boy.

"Indeed I ought to. I brought her up from a child, and introduced her to the public. Know her? I think I did. Did you?" queried the manager, suddenly halting in his speech.

"I saw her ride in public," said the boy.

"Where, senior?"

"At Barcelona," replied Carlos.

"Ah, that was years ago."

"Yes, senior; over three years, I think."

"About three years since she began."

"She must have been a good card for you."

"Yes, yes. Very good for a time."

"Why didn't you retain her in your troupe?"

"She! Why, didn't you know, that is hear of her accident, senior?"

"I haven't been in Spain for more than two years, you know."

"Ah, yes, I remember; you told me so. Well, she met with an accident which ruined her for the arena one night in Madrid."

"Indeed! Was it so severe?" queried Carlos, watching the working of this man's mind—who was now concocting a false story to satisfy the boy's curiosity.

"Oh, yes. Killed."

"Killed, did you say?"

"Yes, senior. That is the hurt proved fatal. She never entered the ring again, and died after a lingering illness, which cost me a world of money be-

fore I got through with it, what with doctors, nurses, and other expenses," concluded the falsifier.

"That was a sad fate, to be sure," said the boy.

"Yes, so it was."

"She was very handsome, I remember."

"Yes, and skilful as well."

"Ay. Where did you say she died?"

"Where?" muttered the manager. "Oh, ay, in Madrid. That is, near Madrid."

"When, senior?"

"Some months since."

"And you took good care of her in her troubles, and saw that she didn't suffer, of course, after her long services to your interest, I daresay."

"Oh, certainly; to be sure I did. I spent a deal of money on her."

"I'm glad you were thus kind to poor little Inez," said the boy, feelingly, "for I was very fond of Inez the Beautiful, as your cards used to designate her."

"You, senior? You, fond of Inez? Then you knew her?"

"Yes, indeed," said Carlos; "I knew her well."

"Is it possible? You didn't say so at first," remarked the manager, beginning to "haul in his horns."

"No. We never have spoken of this lady until now. But, since you were so attentive to her in her misfortune, I am glad to know it, for I was greatly attached to her, I assure you; and I learn of the accident to her with deep sorrow and pain. But you were kind to her, and of course she didn't suffer. I would have torn the man's heart out who had dared to harm that gentle girl, senior," said the boy, rising to his feet, menacingly. "But she's dead, you say; and she died in Madrid. Well, she was a sweet girl, and we were very fond of each other," continued Carlos.

"You were?" asked the manager.

"Yes, senior. Why not?"

"Where did you meet her?"

"In Barcelona at first."

"Who are you, then?"

"I have already told you. I am Ilphonso."

"What is your first name?"

"Carlos," said the boy, looking the manager in the eye.

"Carlos Ilphonso!"

"Yes. Do you remember the youngster who accepted your challenge, three years ago, in the arena at Barcelona to ride your outamed steed for a purse of fifty reales one night?"

"And won it?" said the ring-master, blanching.

"Yes," replied the boy. "And subsequently that same lad had a bout with your expert swordsmen—you remember?"

"And beat them, handsomely!"

"Ay! And he met fair Inez then and there. And you flouted the lad's pretensions, and afterwards threatened to punish the dear little girl if she accepted his attentions—I remember."

"Not me," said the manager, feebly.

"Yes, you! I recollect it all. She told me this herself; and Inez was truth itself, senior—though she scorned you and your threats, which, if you had dared to put into execution, by harrying her in person, I would have broken every bone in your wicked body—boy though I was—for I am that same lad who so astonished you then!"

"You—that lad!"

"Yes, senior. Now you told me that you were kind to lovely little Inez in her final hours of pain and suffering from the accident, and I am glad of it—if you were so. I hear otherwise, senior. I go to Madrid soon, to learn particulars. You will hear from me again anon. Good night."

"You won't be tardy this evening, boy, eh? You won't keep us waiting—eh?"

"You need not wait for me to-night," said Carlos, briefly.

At once he left the manager's room and returned to his lodgings, where he packed his portmanteau and saddle-bags—for he had come to town on horseback—and lay down for a few hours' rest.

He intended to start for Madrid that very night; as to the second announced ring-performance he did not give this matter a thought. He had finished his engagement there. He cared nothing about consequences.

So the boy went to bed, and the mob went to the arena to see him perform, and the manager started for the tent, and the hour came for the opening, and the people yelled more loudly, and crowded each other more fiercely than they did on the first night, and the curtains at length were drawn aside, the bells rang, the band played, the multitude shrieked, the opening scene was gone through with, and the boy had not arrived at the green room!

The manager doubted at first, then hoped, and finally despaired. Three times had he been in the arena, already, to explain, promise, and apologise for the tardiness of the "Boy Gladiator," who ought to

have been there long before. He didn't know why he was detained. He would come. He substituted other acts—did more than he had agreed to do in the bill—but the wild audience did not see it. Where was the boy?

"Fetch the boy! Let's see the boy! Where's the boy? No more talk! Let's see the boy! That's what we paid our money for! Bring in the boy!" they screamed madly.

But the boy was at his lodging, fast asleep.

He didn't come! The manager was at his wits' end. He now saw the "nice little row" in prospective, which the old actor had hinted at (in such an event as this) on the previous night.

He secured his money, however—he never forgot that in any emergency—and again appealed to his excited audience, informing them that "the boy had suddenly been taken ill, and could not appear to-night; and he would do the best he could," etc., etc.

But this was more than a disappointed, excited Spanish ring-audience would bear, anyhow.

A frightful hoot and yell of derision followed the manager's last feeble speech, and then all was confusion, shouts, screams, groans, and chaos.

The lights were put out, the mob tore up the benches, fought each other, destroyed the musical instruments, drove manager and actors out into the darkness, when they mounted their horses, and fled in a body for their lives, minus their wardrobes, waggons, and paraphernalia, while a dozen of the more desperate and undiluting in that motley throng caught up the fallen burning candles that had been thrown down into the ring, and deliberately set fire to the tent and curtains, utterly destroying everything belonging to the arena, and leaving only a blackened spot of ashes to mark the circle where thousands of strangers and townspeople had but a few hours previously convened to witness the performances of the wonderful athlete—the "Boy Gladiator."

But the manager was unable to stem that torrent, and he fled with his people into the interior, he hardly knew whither, by the light of his flaming tent and fixtures.

At midnight Carlos swiftly turned out, paid his bill, mounted his horse, and went on his way towards Madrid.

The ostler at his stable informed the boy that the tent had been destroyed by the mob that evening, because one of the actors refused to appear—he didn't know who; and Carlos rode away by the dim light that occasionally shot up from the smouldering ruins of the late arena, where he didn't perform a second time.

He had got out upon the road about a dozen miles on his way when he came to a small inn by the roadside, where he observed there were several horses standing, which he immediately recognised as those of the company, upon which they had escaped from the mob's violence.

The boy wandered about among them slowly upon his horse, made some inquiries, learned general details, and at last, upon the outskirts of the crowd, he found the manager, who at first didn't know the lad at all.

"Where are you bound now?" asked Carlos, turning his face aside a little.

"I don't know," said the broken manager, for he was now about ruined.

"Why not go to Madrid, senior?"

"What for?" asked the man.

"The boy is going there," said Carlos; "and he will make your fortune for you at the capital."

"The boy!" exclaimed the manager; "you are he! What have you done? Where are you going?" he cried, amazed.

"To Madrid, senior," muttered the lad, in a low tone; "in search of Inez, whom you say you have been so kind to. If, on the contrary, I find you have deceived me, and injured her, I will return and hunt you down, if I travel to the world's end after you! I will find you and punish you as surely as you now live to hear me promise it!"

With these words Carlos plunged away into the darkness, en route to Madrid.

CHAPTER XXV.

AT the close of a previous chapter we left Inez, who had suffered so much and so long, upon her little pallet, in the old duenna's house at Leganes, arrayed in her winding-sheet, prepared for burial. But at noon next day one of the women near by in the room uttered a shriek.

"Good Heavens!" she exclaimed; "she's alive yet!"

The old duenna and another woman came to the bed, to behold the eyes of the supposed corpse staring open, and the lips wide apart, spasmodically at first and then steadily, as the Donna Inez tried to look about her, and strove to speak, to the consternation of those who fancied she had been dead at the least twelve long hours.

But she had fallen into a trance only, through absolute weakness and long prostration, from which, through as unaccountable a cause as the attack itself, she came out alive, and eventually to health.

Within twenty-four hours the girl got command of her articulation, and brightened up remarkably.

They gave her stimulants, and, on the second day Inez called the poor old duenna to her side, and in a gentle tone—a mere whisper at first—she managed to cheer that ancient dame's heart by informing her that she had means in ready gold to pay for her care, and that she must now look to raising her from that bed of prostration—for she was determined to live yet, and for a purpose.

The old woman told her how long she had been on her hands, how very ill she had been, and all that; then Inez spoke of her "friend," young Carlos, and of the money he had left with her when he went away.

This interested her hearer the most, though she feared that it was but a phantasm of the poor, weak girl's brain; but in a day or two Inez satisfied her that it was true. She had the gold deposited to her own credit in the bank at Madrid, and it should be forthcoming for the old nurse's benefit.

The girl was as good as her word; within two weeks she was able to sign a written order for the delivery of two hundred dollars to the doctor in attendance, who went personally to the bank and obtained the money, which Inez placed in the nurse's hands.

Inez soon began thinking of the old days. She found out how dreadfully long it had been since she was first hurt, and how desperately prostrated she had been.

They didn't tell her of all this at first, and she learned particulars only by degrees as she grew better and stronger.

The first two hundred dollars were quickly used up. Then she drew out another hundred, and still she had more and the accumulated interest besides.

She rode out at last. Her wounds had long ago healed. She was only weak and thin in flesh now. But she improved very rapidly after this turn in her condition.

Pale, wan, worn out with her terrible sufferings, greatly consequent upon the neglect to which she had been subjected through the heartlessness of the manager, yet lovely still, and every day growing stronger.

Thanks to her extraordinarily robust constitution, which had never been impaired at all, even by this accident and subsequent illness and bad treatment, she finally got comparatively well once more, and was able to move about, and ride and walk a little; and at last became quite her old natural self—some two years older since her trouble commenced—but "Fair Inez" again to all intents and purposes; and still gaining strength and good spirits every day and week as the three or four months passed by.

It was at this juncture Carlos went over to the little town of Leganes.

It was but a small village, and the houses were generally of the poorer description, and at some distance apart.

Carlos entered the place with but very imperfect ideas as to how he should proceed. But he fancied that he could find some one who might remember Inez.

With this view, after noting that there were but twenty or thirty houses within sight as he rode through the town, he determined to begin at one extremity and call at every habitation. He saw until he could ascertain what he desired to know.

At the fourth house he encountered the woman who had occasionally called to assist the old duenna when Inez's life was despaired of.

"What is your name, señor?" asked the woman, kindly.

"Carlos," said the young man.

"You are the person we most desire to see here then," responded the woman, who remembered this name as having been mentioned often by Inez. "You have been gone from Spain a good while?"

"Yes," said the youth; "over two years. Much longer than I expected when I left. It is near two years and a half since I sailed from Barcelona last."

"That is a long while."

"I have found it so. Now can you tell me anything of a young lady who was brought into this town more than a year ago as I hear—an invalid—and was here some months before she died or left this place?"

"What was her name, señor?"

"Donna Inez she was called."

"Yes; I know the young lady—and a very beautiful, sweet girl she is too."

"Is! Then she's alive yet?" exclaimed Carlos.

"Oh, yes, señor. But she had a very narrow escape from burial."

Then the good woman, gratified to be able to make the young stranger happy, as she had been, also, to

render Inez so of late, went into details, and Carlos was greatly rejoiced at the news that the girl he sought was well again.

"Where is she now?" he asked.

"Close by, señor. Will you go to see her?"

"With all my heart," said Carlos.

The kindly disposed neighbour put on her little white cap, and led the way at once to the old duenna's poor dwelling.

Inez was happy now, comparatively.

The bloom of health had returned to her, and she never looked more charming than she now did in her handsomely fitting attire, as she sat conversing with the old duenna in her neatly furnished room.

But the gold was melting away, notwithstanding, and they were talking of their future prospects.

"It was a fortunate thing, duenna," said Inez, pleasantly, "that my dear young friend Carlos should have been so thoughtful and kind, as he was, in leaving me his money to take care of, eh? He insisted that I should use it, too, if ever I needed it. It is disappearing, though, and we must have more. Oh, how I should love to see Carlos again!" she exclaimed.

"He will come again, think you?" queried the nurse.

"Yes—yes, indeed, will he!"

"He has been long gone, though."

"It doesn't matter. He will come. If he is alive, he will return. He will find me. He promised, and I have full faith that he will seek me out."

At this moment she looked out of the window, and saw their neighbour approaching with a young gentleman whom neither she nor the duenna knew.

"Who is that?" asked the girl, pointing to the stranger, with the dusky face and bearded chin.

"I don't know," responded the old woman. "It is our neighbour, with a stranger, and a very nice-looking man he is. But they are passing. Some friend of hers—from the city, I should say; but a well-dressed gentleman—verily."

"They are coming in," said Inez, wondering.

In they came! straight into the room where Inez and the old duenna sat.

The neighbour directed the young man's attention to the lovely girl, who rose as they thus informally entered, and she said to her gentleman companion:

"Is that the young lady you seek, señor?"

"Inez!" exclaimed Carlos, springing forward, quickly, and lifting the fair creature in his stout arms, as he would an infant, and pressing her to his heart. "Inez! dear Inez! Don't you know your long-absent Carlos?"

There was joy in that humble hamlet for the next few minutes, as may well be conceived when the gentle girl realized the fact that Carlos had come to bless her!

She sank in tearful raptures upon his manly breast!

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE manager's occupation was gone in Spain after this last explosion and the breaking up of his establishment by the crazy mob. Nobody was personally harmed, however.

The late guardian of Inez saw that Carlos was after him with a "sharp stick." He must get out, and keep out of his way. The "Boy Gladiator" was too much for him! He soon left Spain for ever.

Pietro Ilphonso, the gipsy father of the boy, became a wanderer and died in England.

Carlos never saw his father from his childhood, and really didn't care to meet him after he had learned his erratic history.

The aristocratic father of the Donna Una had had no intelligence whatever as to the fate of his beautiful daughter. He could never comprehend the matter at all.

When, however, after a year or two, she did not return he feared that she had eloped with some one beneath her in rank and station, but he was too proud even to acknowledge this suspicion to any but his own heart.

When the first emotions of mutual joy upon their fortunate meeting had passed between Carlos and Inez the beautiful girl recounted to her lover all that had transpired within her recollection in relation to her own career, commenting gently but plainly upon the course the manager had pursued towards her after the accident.

"I always told you, Carlos," she said, "that I put little faith in that man's friendship, except so long as I was of service to him, and was helping to put money into his pocket."

"Yes, Inez; I have not forgotten this, and I had the satisfaction of reminding him of this ingratitude on his part to his face."

"By the way, where is my dog Victor, Carlos?"

"Safe, Inez, and close by, in the city."

"At Madrid?"

"Yes; I was obliged to leave him in the care of

a trusty person there while I was travelling about in search of you. But I have seen him frequently, and he has been of great service and value to me, I assure you, in my last two years' wanderings."

"I knew he would be a grand companion for you. But I want to see him very much."

"So you shall, but you must leave this place."

"I am very comfortable here now, Carlos, but I've had a pretty rough time of it since I have been here, except since I began to spend your money which you so kindly left with me," she added, smiling.

"Why didn't you begin on it earlier?"

Inez explained to her lover why, and went into details as to all her late troubles and perils.

"Well, I have plenty more, Inez; ample for all my present ambition, ample to give me a good start in life."

The boy then briefly explained himself to the young lady's great satisfaction.

At a late hour that evening Carlos took leave of Inez and rode back to Madrid, promising to return on the following day and bring Victor with him.

He had the documents in the Donna Una's handwriting, showing her to be his mother, and he was querying in his mind the propriety of submitting these papers to her father, the old Don Sebastian, at Tortosa.

He had no personal object in this proposition. He had means enough—all he desired—for the present. He was a sailor, he thought.

He felt himself competent to command and navigate a vessel anywhere; and he fancied the life too, notwithstanding all the mishaps he had encountered. He hoped that he had experienced all the disasters that were set down to his fortune at any rate.

But his design was to follow the sea for a profession. He thought he would like to own a vessel and command it.

He felt quite equal to this, and he had sufficient means to purchase a good one. His idea was to leave Spain under any circumstances, and he thought to proceed to the western continent somewhere, either to North or South America, and enter there into trade upon the coast.

All this was in the future, however. But he did not lose sight of this design, and, eventually, as we shall see, put it into practical effect.

As to presenting or forwarding the papers found in the wreck in the dead woman's possession to her aristocratic old father he didn't know what to do.

The chances were that Don Sebastian—of whom he as yet knew but little—would be very glad to know positively the real fate of his only child. But he belonged to a class who, as Carlos knew, did not like to accept even "the inevitable," where it militated against their nice notions of pride, and position, and all that.

The document, in his daughter's unmistakable handwriting, with which the parent was of course familiar, was proof of its genuineness, and would explain itself.

Whether any good could come from exposing the facts of his mother's history now, even to Don Sebastian himself, was a question in his mind as yet. He had thought much of it, and was still undecided.

Would the lordly old don receive this paper from the hands of her son in kindness? Would he believe its contents? How could he help it?

But would not the towering old fellow be very angry at his dead daughter's folly and infamy in secretly marrying a base-born gipsy, then running away from his protection clandestinely? Very likely he would. What could he do about it? There were the facts!

The daughter had erred—married beneath her rank, had a son, then ran away, and now she was dead, and this was her own voluntary confession.

But, as yet, her father knew nothing of all this—not one syllable. He had sought her everywhere, and couldn't find her. How would it suit this aristocratic "scion of a noble house" to learn, four years after she had absconded, of all this error and misfortune at once?

Would any one be benefited by the disclosure? Certainly the boy would not. He didn't seek any benefit or reward. Would it not be better that he should keep his mother's secret still, and work out his career, with what she had left him, by himself?

Carlos was in a quandary. He could not transmit the papers simply to the old man without informing him how they had been discovered.

He could do this, but he did not care to do so. He would hold the matter under advisement. The secret would keep, he thought. He would consult Inez.

CHAPTER XXVII.

UPON the inside of one of the splendid diamond rings which Carlos took from the skeleton finger of his mother it will be recollected that the word "Montrail" was engraved—which the boy could not so



[FOUND AT LAST.]

count for then, but he had some time since determined to adopt it for his own.

He would not take the name of his father—except as he did temporarily with the manager of the arena, “for one night only”—because he neither fancied it nor approved the gipsy’s conduct. He did not choose to take his mother’s name, because Perillo was an aristocratic family title to which he had no right he conceived under the circumstances of his case.

After his return he ascertained that the Donna Una’s mother’s maiden name was Montrail. This lady, the wife of Don Sebastian, was a Frenchwoman—and Montrail suited Carlos best.

After his return to Spain, therefore, he took this name; and, upon presenting the beautiful ring to Inez, as he did soon after, as their “engagement ring,” he pointed to this inscription—informed her that the ring was his grandmother’s—on the mother’s side—which was true—for it was Una’s dead mother’s name and ring—and he told her what she never knew before, and what she had never inquired about—namely, that his name was Carlos Montrail, which she accepted without going into farther particulars.

The boy disposed of the jewels he had discovered in the lady’s belt on the wreck, and when he had got all his funds together, including the proceeds from the sale of the gems and the money he had also brought back, after his exile, he found himself in possession of thirty-three thousand Spanish dollars as his fortune with which to commence life once more.

He took Inez to Madrid and placed her, at her own request, at a convent school, where she remained a year.

Her education was imperfect, and she desired to study awhile before being married—a plan which pleased Carlos, who meantime proposed to travel upon the Continent and look about for such a vessel as he wanted to purchase.

While Inez was at the convent school Carlos went to Lisbon, in Portugal, and afterwards up the coast to France.

He travelled twelve or fourteen months and then came back to Madrid, and soon afterwards he and Inez were married.

They took a journey to Barcelona and down the coast to Tortosa.

At the former place they visited the very grove where they originally met as children when Inez was in the zenith of her fame—and where Carlos first became acquainted with the brave dog Victor.

At Tortosa the young man inquired farther as to

the character and disposition of old Don Sebastian, and he learned that he was haughty, proud, self-opinionated, and immensely rich.

Carlos concluded to forward the daughter’s documents to him by messenger without explanation, and he did so, but never heard a word regarding them from that hour—directly or indirectly.

They were sealed up with a black wafer, in a plain envelope, and addressed in a plain hand, simply to the “Don Sebastian Perillo, Tortosa.” There were no explanations—no comment.

When the old aristocrat received the envelope he broke the sombre seal and perused the terrible confession of his passionate and erring daughter with sensations of mingled disappointment, anger, and wounded pride.

He could not doubt its genuineness. The handwriting was hers. It came from Una! There was no doubt about it. There could be no question as to its authenticity—and it was her dying will and testament. All the circumstances of her sudden leave-taking were clearly referred to, and she was dead.

But where? Who had forwarded to him this offensive yet natural and authentic document? Into whose hands had it fallen? Where was this son? What had become of the jewels and money alluded to? Would this boy—this pledge of such a hateful union—ever appear to mortify his pride, annoy him?

Where were his daughter’s remains? These papers must have been found on her person by whoever sent them to him. Who was it? The son himself? Would he dare to show his face to him—to his erring mother’s injured, outraged, lordly father?

Thus queried, and argued, and raved the old aristocrat; but he never had a question answered.

So far as he was concerned in his pride he kept the mystery of his daughter’s offence a secret to the day of his death. He never spoke of it, of her, or of the boy afterwards.

A few months after the marriage of Carlos Montrail to Inez they went over again to Lisbon. There the young man entered into negotiations for a fine vessel which he fancied, and he finally purchased her for a thousand doubloons—about half his fortune.

He had her newly fitted out, and shipped a good crew, and sailed in her as master—taking his young wife and his brave dog Victor with him—for Pernambuco, on the South American coast. Upon arriving there he went into the interior, and purchased a hacienda, or small family estate.

After this Carlos—who had now come to be known as “Captain Montrail,” went in his own vessel to the coast of Africa, and traded, and sailed back and forth from Pernambuco to Rio and Montevideo and to the Southern seas, or up and down the Spanish main to Cuba and back.

He was successful, and laid up money. Inez remained with Victor at the hacienda. Once or twice she accompanied her husband to sea, but she did not fancy it.

Four months after the arrival of the newly married couple at Pernambuco they were blessed with a little one, to the great joy of the young parents. They called it their pretty angel, and both came to be very fond of it.

It was a girl. The captain desired to call it Inez, after its beautiful mother, but the wife said no, “it was their angel;” and finally they came to call it so, until they formally named the sweet girl “Angela.”

She was like her mother, and inherited all the daring spirit, gracefulness of form, agility of motion, bravery of heart, and hardy constitution, which Inez originally possessed, while she partook also of her father’s characteristics, to a singular degree, his strength of nerve, his indomitable perseverance, and his genius.

As the little girl grew up her fondness for outdoor pastimes and exercises was intense. In Brazil, located in the mountainous country, and near the coast, she had rare opportunities to cultivate these peculiar tastes.

She learned to ride and swim and shoot, and sail her tiny boat at an early age. She finally went with her father to sea, upon some of his shorter voyages—and upon longer ones afterward. And she studied navigation—and visited foreign countries in company with her father, who took great pride in teaching her all these things—for she greatly loved “life on the ocean.”

But the daughter was not permitted to neglect other useful duties such as adorn and grace the gentler sex—nor did she seek to do this. On the contrary she was an excellent student.

In a word this only child of Carlos and Inez Montrail proved a wonderful girl, and her life was full of adventures and romance.

And here we must leave this interesting family in the enjoyment of happiness and prosperity, after their many trials and perils, and trust the reader will have relished the reading as we have the writing of this truthful history of the youth who had been so aptly named “the Boy Gladiator.”

THE END.



THE SNAPT LINK.

BY THE AUTHOR OF
"Sybil's Inheritance," "Evelyn's Plot," &c., &c.

CHAPTER XLVI.

Thou hid'st a thousand daggers in thy thoughts
Which thou hast sheltered in thy stony heart,
To stab at half an hour of my life.
What! canst thou not forbear me half an hour?

NEVER perhaps in the annals of the English courts of law had a more profound sensation drawn together such a dense and deeply interested throng as when Gertrude Mugrave was placed on her trial for the murder of her beautiful and heiress cousin.

Spectators very different from the usual rank of those who congregate to listen to such proceedings were gathered to hear the romantic tale, and see the fair criminal who had been at once wicked and passionate enough to sacrifice her safety and innocence at the shrine of jealousy and revenge.

When the girl at length entered that densely packed court, and for one lightning-like instant raised her eyes on the sea of faces turned towards her, a deep scarlet flush and an irrepressible shudder marked the extent of the emotion that thrilled through her delicate frame.

There were glances and whispers of astonishment exchanged between the crowd as they gazed on that fragile, calm, pure creature, who stood in that terrible position, and wondered that such passions could find a home in such an uncongenial frame as the prisoner's physique presented.

The judge himself appeared to entertain a reflection of the feelings that engrossed the audience, for his features wore an expression of even anxious interest when the important question "Guilty or not guilty?" was put to that remarkable prisoner at the bar.

"Not guilty!" sounded like a silver trumpet through the hushed court.

Low and soft as were the accents they resounded like an echo, and not one in the throng perhaps lost the distinct, thrilling sound.

For the moment there was not an individual in that crowded assemblage but either believed in or hoped that the plea was true. But no mere feeling could sway that solemn tribunal, and, ere the sensation had well died away, the counsel had begun his speech; and the passions were swayed to the opposing side by the touching tale he had to relate.

Once again the wretched tragedy was rehearsed; once again the suspicions of the audience were roused against her who seemed the sole person who could have done that fearful deed, and the more ordinary

[ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL.]

and less important witnesses who were first called but too surely confirmed the idea of her guilt.

The servants, the surgeons, the deposition of Madeline Cleveland, now too ill to repeat her testimony, were first put in. Then Aubrey Lestrangle was called—the bereaved betrothed of the murdered girl.

Far more haggard and gloomy in appearance, more startled and anxious in mien, than when he had been called to give evidence many long months ago, the young man excited a deeper sympathy, a more credulous belief among those who looked on his worn features than when the first excitement of passion and despair had fevered his demeanour and his countenance on the former trial.

Deep, earnest, positive were the assertions he made respecting that memorable morning. The whole weight of suspicion turned on the prisoner with double power from the crushing force with which each circumstance was detailed, and shuddering aversion replaced the tender sympathy which had hitherto greeted Gertrude in her terrible disgrace and danger.

The examination was concluded. Gertrude's counsel had done his best to shake the testimony which had thus damaged his client, and the case for the crown was nearly and triumphantly closed when a slight bustle was heard in the court, a note was brought to the prisoner's counsel, and a peculiar and questioning expression passed over his face as he perused it; then he once again turned to the departing witness.

"Mr. Lestrangle, this is so important a case that I may be pardoned if I ask you once more, as one of the chief witnesses on whom the life of this young lady depends, to recall fully and deliberately that last night of Miss Hilda Mugrave's life. You distinctly swear that the last time you saw that lamented young lady alive was when you bade her farewell on her retiring to rest on that evening?"

"Certainly; there can be no doubt of it. On the following morning I was summoned to her chamber, where she lay a corpse," returned Aubrey, with the same low tone and pale looks that he had preserved throughout the trial.

"No passing, momentary interview—no final love taking had passed between you afterwards?" repeated the counsel, still more resolutely.

"None. Miss Mugrave's chamber was, as has been before stated, in the ladies' wing, quite apart from the remainder of the house," was his hurried reply, as if impatient of the apparently useless reiteration.

"Perjured murderer and thief that you are, your measure of sin is at last full, Aubrey Lestrangle," said a stern voice, which made the whole audience start as

if galvanized by a spirit's call. "You have uttered your last false perjury in the sight of Heaven and man, after a long and solemn chance for reflection and repentance. And the spirit of the dead—the injured innocence of the living—cry in unison to Heaven against your crime."

The speaker was a woman whose appearance, though new to the audience it thrilled, was yet familiar to the readers.

And it need only be said that it was Robina Falco who thus suddenly appeared like a thundercloud before the pallid, awe-stricken witness to give some idea of the effect her tall, gaunt, imposing figure would produce.

"This is infamous—false—insolent! I claim the protection of the court," gasped Aubrey, his very teeth chattering, till the words were scarcely intelligible. "That woman is a mad woman, or an impostor, and—"

"Silence," interposed the judge, who, like the rest of the court, had literally been stunned by the sudden flash which had withered Aubrey Lestrangle to that ashen pallor. "If this person has anything to say, it must be after being properly sworn and examined. Meanwhile Mr. Lestrangle will be good enough to remain in court to hear the charge against him—if indeed there is one that will bear the name."

Robina calmly stepped into the witness box, which Aubrey had just quitted.

There was a lofty expression of contempt in her remarkable features which actually imparted for the moment almost the beauty of dignity to their wan harshness.

"There needs no compulsion, and there will be no doubt when my tale is told," she said as she ascended the step and stood quietly in the full gaze of the crowd, waiting for the administration of the solemn oath, which was in this instance repeated with far slower and more significant earnestness than it too often conveys to the ear.

"Now, Mrs. Falco, what have you to say respecting this sad business?" asked the counsel for the crown, with a look of well nigh as much keen curiosity as the audience betrayed.

"Simply that the innocent girl at the bar is as stainless as an unborn babe and free from every shade of guilt save of too womanly and blind a devotion to one for whose sake she was content to bear the blame and the danger of the fearful crime—and that the murderer of Hilda Mugrave stands before you in the person of him who was about to swear to protect and cherish her for life—he who should have been her bridegroom, Aubrey Lestrangle."

There was a cry—then a murmur—a buzz that

could scarcely be called aught but one gigantic groan of astonishment and horror.

Gertrude alone seemed scarcely so moved as the rest. Her eyes closed in thankfulness indeed, and her lips moved, in silent, heartfelt thanksgiving for her own chance of safety.

But the horror of the crime thus revealed was too fearful for her to indulge any but the most subdued and saddened emotion of relief.

"This is a terrible charge to make, Mrs. Falco," said the judge, hurriedly, evidently moved by the startling assertion. "And it is my duty to remind you, not only of the solemnity of your oath but also of the iniquity which without absolute and convincing proof you are committing in casting one shade of such a foul stain on a hitherto honorable gentleman."

"I thank you, my lord," returned the woman, with the sort of lofty indifference that characterized her singular mien. "But I believe you will confess I do not need your caution when you have heard all I have to say. But I must tell the tale in my own way, and it shall not be a long one, though it will work shame to one, and save the innocent from the misery and the disgrace that have so long clouded their lives and pursued their steps."

"You will not be interrupted, my good woman," said the judge, kindly, "though you must be prepared for a severe test of your truth, unless you have the strongest proofs to offer of your story."

"There will be no need for much proof. That white craven, yonder dare not deny one syllable, and if he did in words his face would contradict his very oath," she answered, loftily. "But I will not detain your lordship," she added, quickly, as the judge made a warning gesture to arrest her wanderings. "It will be soon told. My lord, I had an especial interest in the young girl whose deposition has been this day read, and she is now too ill for any examination as to the mute testimony she has so long and heretofore hidden from the light. I mean in Madeline Cleveland, my lord, who was in the character of Mr. LeStrange's cousin and was at Rose Mount on the occasion of his wedding."

"Do you mean that the young lady is not Mr. LeStrange's cousin by that expression?" said the counsel, quickly.

"I mean that she is his cousin, but that neither he nor she herself knew it then or know it now," returned Robina, looking sternly at Aubrey. "The part she should have played in his bridal was a very different one to that of a bridesmaid. In the confusion of the household, in that busy season, it was very easy for me to accomplish my purpose of entering the house that I might warn the deceived bride-elect of the danger she would run in the fulfilment of her vows, though I could not then prove what I believed and hoped was the truth. The day rolled on, but Miss Mugrave was too constantly surrounded for me to find one instant of access to her alone, and I remained after nightfall with the determination to visit her chamber when all had retired to rest to execute my purpose. But the household was late in retiring, and I remained in my hiding-place till long after midnight. There was another wanderer besides myself in the silent galleries, and that was Aubrey LeStrange, who, as I guessed and afterwards proved, was taking a long and bitter leave of her whom he had so deeply injured—who was a victim to his false race before she saw the light. Again I paused, knowing his dark and crafty nature, and believing that there was no safety to those who crossed his path."

"My lord," said the woman, suddenly lifting up her hand with a wild yet dignified gesture, "I come from a hot and passionate clime where the men and women too love and hate as you Northern icebergs do not comprehend. I loved Madeline Cleveland for her mother's sake, and I hated the interloper to her rights with my whole soul. But I have never ceased to be thankful that the poor girl was neither led to her fate by my hand nor tortured by the tidings from my lips. It happened thus," she went on, more quickly. "I had just resolved to risk all and steal to her room, and had actually my hand on the handle of her door, when I fancied I heard a movement in the chamber where Aubrey LeStrange was lingering, and I drew back and hastened to my hiding-place. But whether I unknowingly woke the girl, or whether she was too fevered by excitement for sleep and caught the sounds of my cautious feet, I cannot say. Some few moments afterwards, however, her door opened, and she came out in a white wrapping-gown, looking as colourless as her own dress as the moonbeams streamed on her features. She hurried on, as I supposed, to some neighbouring room, perhaps to her cousin's, for aid in her nervous pangs."

"I scarcely could tell how long was the interval ere she returned, but when I next saw her gliding back like a corpse just risen from the grave I could have sworn that some dreadful secret had come to her knowledge during that brief interval of absence. Even I, hard and resentful as my heart was to-

wards Madeline Cleveland's rival, could not but shiver at her ghostly look and mien and pause ere I even tried to add to the stunning blow she had apparently received. But a strange curiosity and sympathy prompted me to carry out my purpose. If she already knew what I had to say I might perhaps even soothe the stricken, wounded heart; if not, it was needful to bring the knowledge home to one who was about to sin as it were unknowingly. Again I peered from my hiding-place, ready to start on my mission, and again an approaching step, a veiled light accosted me. But this time it was no female form, no delicate draped figure that met my eyes. It was Aubrey LeStrange, with the very demon of hate and alarm burning in his eyes, and in one crimson spot on his corpse-like cheeks. I watched him enter that unhappy girl's chamber. I waited in motionless silence till he once more emerged from it; then—Heaven defend me from ever seeing such a countenance more!"

Robina shuddered violently as she uttered the words, and there was that in her manner, tone, and look that carried unmistakable conviction to the minds of her audience.

"Go on," said the counsel, in a half-smothered tone.

"What happened then?"

"I did not wait long," she said. "A terrible idea prompted me to ascertain what had happened in that brief interval. I stole softly to the bride-elect's chamber, and entered like a ghost. The girl lay on her couch, already the bride of death, murdered by him who should have received her vows on the coming morn."

"And you—you did not give the alarm—you did not call for help?" exclaimed the counsel, while a shudder ran through the whole crowded throng.

"It would have been of no avail," she said, "save to bring the suspicion on myself as an interloper in the mansion. I ascertained that the girl was dead, hopelessly gone from this world, then I fled as from an unhallowed shrine. But, as if to make the assurance doubly certain, there was another proof—another witness of his guilt. There, in the very couch, lying on the breast of the hapless girl, was a fragment of a chain worn by the murderer on that eventful night, and doubtless broken in the struggle by the unhappy victim of his crime."

Robina produced the broken end of a curious and valuable chain, which had evidently been rent in an abrupt and violent manner from its connection with the remainder of the trinkets.

It was handed to the judge, and from him to the jury, who each examined it with a kind of repugnant horror.

"Where was this found?" asked the judge, sternly.

"In the keeping of her who first discovered it in the unhappy girl's bed, and, in true if mistaken woman's devotion, kept the knowledge in her own bosom till it should be necessary to save an innocent life by avowing it. This is the paper in which it was wrapped, and I have a witness whose testimony cannot be impugned as to the circumstances of its discovery."

"Name the witness, my good woman," said the judge, who, in the singular circumstances of the case, well nigh seemed to take the conduct of the examination from the counsel engaged.

"He is here," she said; "Mr. Philip Dacre."

The young man named stepped forward with a calm, resolute air, but those few whose attention was in any measure diverted from the proceedings to the accused criminal noted the fierce tiger glare that blazed in Aubrey's eyes as he saw his quondam companion and friend appear at the woman's summons.

The oath was once more administered amidst breathless silence, through which a pin might have been heard to drop, then Philip's deep voice came on the stillness.

"The last witness spoke truly. Miss Madeline Cleveland betrayed in the delirium of fever the existence of some snapt link, which troubled her mind, and by degrees she revealed in answer to my questions the place in which it was hidden, wrapped in a paper containing these words:

"Found in poor Hilda's couch, on the morning of her murder. Only to be revealed to save life—innocent life."

MADLINE CLEVELAND.
"Now, my lord, I can myself swear to the link being part of a chain which Mr. Aubrey LeStrange was wearing at the time of the murder of Miss Hilda Mugrave; and I believe it to have been as usual attached to his dress on the night in question, though unfortunately the person most likely to vouch for that circumstance is not in a state to bear testimony to that exact date. I say unfortunately, because it is but justice to a young lady who has endured so much undesired odium and misery as the accused prisoner that her innocence should be fully proved by the establishment of that conclusive fact."

"At any rate, there is sufficient evidence to justify my committing Mr. LeStrange for trial and liberating the prisoner at the bar on her own engagement to appear if called upon," observed the judge. "Gentlemen of the jury, I presume your verdict will fully carry me out in such a decision."

But ere the foreman could reply there was a rush, a loud cry, a scuffle close to the spot where Philip Dacre stood.

Then came the report of a pistol, and a heavy fall that made Gertrude Mugrave's blood curdle and a deadly faintness dazzle her eyes to all that was passing around her.

But when the mist cleared away, and the kindly words of her counsel who hurried to her side recalled her to her own wonderful deliverance, she looked fearfully around, lest that safety should have been purchased at another generous advocate's cost.

There was a crowd, a buzz, a prostrate form being carried away from the court in slow procession; but gazing on the unhappy sufferer stood the grave, sad, but noble features of Philip Dacre.

Gertrude guessed at once that the wretched murderer of Hilda Mugrave had attempted in his frenzy to commit yet another revengeful crime, and that the fate he had inflicted on others recoiled on his own guilty head.

CHAPTER XLVII.

Speak! for thou long enough hast acted dumb. Thou hast a tongue; come, let us hear its tale; Not like thin ghosts or disembodied creatures, But with thy bones and flesh and limbs and features.

"This sensible, and has asked for you, dear Madeline," said Philip Dacre to the pale, fragile invalid, who in her whole appearance and mien still bore the marks of that terrible illness from which she had just emerged.

Her splendid wealth of hair had been shorn of half its length; her eyes looked unnaturally large and brilliant from the extreme pallor of her wan cheeks, and the slight figure was enveloped in thick shawls, that at once hid its injuries and its emaciation.

"Can he live? Does he remember? Does he repent?" she gasped; "or is his heart full of rancour against me for what I did?"

"For what you did, my peerless, noble girl!" exclaimed Philip, eagerly. "You, who have kept the fearful secret at the cost of such disgrace and misery—who resisted the splendid bribe of a princely inheritance which was within your grasp, and bore poverty and hardship and shame for the sake of one who had injured you to the very quick. Madeline, he is dying, or I dare hardly trust you in his presence, the dead he has proved himself."

"Hush, Philip, hush! He is dying; he is going before his Maker, and I once loved him, and you were once his friend," she said, sadly. "Leave his sins and his punishment to the Omnipotence we have all but too terribly forgotten in our past lives. Now I am ready; let us go. Where is 'she'—Robina?"

she added as the faintness which any exertion induced warned her of her weakness and dependance.

"She is not here; she has gone on one of her mysterious errands," replied Philip, "but Mrs. Nelson shall accompany us, my darling, in case the emotion is too much for your strength; yet while I am at your side you should fear nothing, need nothing else," he added, reproachfully.

"Philip, even now I dare not consent to your generous wish," she said, sadly. "Remember what I am—homeless, penniless, with a stain on my own as well as my parent's name; and you are of a noble race, although, as you say, of no ample wealth. Philip, be advised—take my gratitude, my prayers and blessings; leave poor Madeline to her own natural destiny and seek a more fitting bride."

"Yes, one more fitting; because I am not worthy of so peerless a jewel," he returned, fondly. "Come, my beloved, let us not waste another moment on such useless, hopeless argument. I will not give you up unless you can say you do not love—that you would be wretched with me as your husband."

It might be presumed that Madeline could not give any such assurance, for she obeyed as meekly as if she had already spoken her vow of submission; and in as brief a space as was possible for the preparations she and Philip, with the nurse who had tended her so carefully, were on their road to the house where the dying criminal was lying.

Aubrey LeStrange had not been conveyed far from the scene of his attempted murder and consequent suicide; the injuries were too severe and his case too hopeless for such a measure.

Since that terrible day—now some week or more having elapsed—he had been attended with what some would call cruel skill and care, in order to prolong his life for the due execution of justice on his head. But there was no hope of even a temporary rallying, and the ravings of fever that had marked the days

in question had but been a confirmation of the tale which that unexpected witness had related of his guilt and the manner of his crime.

At length it was coming to an end—that time of suffering. The fever had yielded to the skill of the surgeons, but the utter prostration of the patient heralded his inevitable fate.

Madeline had never trembled in the hour of her most imminent peril as she shuddered while slowly advancing to that bed of death, where the ghastly face and bandaged form of her guilty lover lay in helpless prostration before her.

"Aubrey, it is I—Madeline; you sent for me. Oh, may it be to confess and repent your fearful sin," she said. "Heaven may pardon even now."

"Madeline, don't you torture me," he said, with a fierceness that was only restrained by the utter powerlessness of his frame. "It was not that. I wanted to tell you why—I was you—you who did it all, and I hate you in death—you hear me, Madeline?"

"Hush, hush! In mercy do not indulge such fearful thoughts in the very hour of death!" she said, tremblingly. "Aubrey, Heaven knows I have shielded you at my own bitter cost. I have let the innocent suffer. I have borne tortures of doubt and remorse for your sake. Oh, do not die with wrath in your heart."

"I do—I will!" he returned. "Harkye, Madeline—when I left you on that night I found she—Hilda—was there, and had heard all—all I had said. She shrank from me—reproached me with maddening misery and scorn in her words and looks. All was at stake. If she betrayed me I was a ruined, disgraced man; and I—I silenced her for ever. Now you know all; and you may bless the knowledge that you ruined her and me. Now go, and take my curse!"

A faint cry escaped the girl's lips; she clung to the post of the bed, or she would have fallen to the ground.

No wonder that her strength failed in that fearful moment, for even as those terrible words escaped his parched lips the rattle sounded in his throat—his eyes rolled wildly. The guilty spirit had gone to its account.

Madeline knew no more.

She was unconscious of the sound of many footsteps ascending the stairs, of a commotion in the adjoining apartment, and of the entrance into the death-chamber of more than one heavy tread. Yet a faint idea that she had heard a deep, long sigh, and the words, "He was the sole heir of my name, guilty as he was!" from a feeble and shaking voice, came like an indistinct mist over her confused brain, as she was carried in Philip Dacre's arms from the awful scene.

And she had heard right.

Lord Marsden, leaning on the arm of Rupert De Vere, and followed by two older and feebler figures, had just arrived in time to witness the last breathings of a nature consistent in evil to the end of a selfish and unscrupulous life.

That lament of the last of a long and noble life was perhaps the sole requiem of the wretched Aubrey Lestrangle.

"It might not have been so," he said, sadly. "It is in my own sin, and my just punishment. I brought misery and disgrace on one who trusted me, and a fate almost equally unmerited on one I loved, in my hot and impetuous and thoughtless youth. Now in my old age I am childless, and my name extinct and forgotten. I dare not murmur. May Heaven accept my grief and suffering as an atonement ere I die."

"Is it so, Lord Marsden? Do you really mourn and repent? Would you atone for the past?" asked Mr. Clinton, who with Robina Falco had followed the old peer into the chamber unnoticed. "Would you accept the son of Sybilla Mgrave as your own lawful heir, could the past be recalled?"

"Would I accept Heaven's greatest boon on my bended knees? even if it were to but herald my own last hour!" gasped the old man, leaning heavily on Rupert for support.

"Then, Rupert Lestrangle, ask your father's blessing, and give him your pardon in return," said the old clergyman, solemnly. "You are the lawful son of himself and of Sybilla Mgrave, though for five-and-twenty long years I have kept the secret in my own breast in fulfillment of my oath. It may be that you are far more worthy of the rank and wealth that await you than if you had been brought up in the lap of luxury and in the training of a false and wayward father. There is that in the blood of the Lestrangles that needs to be purged by a fiery trial from its taint."

Lord Marsden grasped the young man's arm convulsively while he glared as it were in terrified agony on the speaker.

"Do not torture me. I have suffered enough. It cannot be—the marriage was false—false, and poor Sybilla died broken hearted!" he gasped.

"Not so, Lord Marsden," returned Mr. Clinton, more kindly than he had yet spoken, for there was something that went to the very heart in that old man's terrible agony. "I am not so lost to humanity as to play with a father's feelings so ruthlessly. Listen, and I will soon explain the mystery that you doubt so fearfully. You know, though others have yet to be told, that your marriage with Sybilla Mgrave was solemnized by myself, then a candidate for but not a deacon in holy orders. And as such the marriage was, as you supposed, invalid, should it suit your purpose to break it at any future time. But you did not remember, you did not perhaps even know, that the spot, the house, where that ceremony took place was just across the border, and on that Scottish ground where far less than the ceremony of our own church is enough to make it valid and binding. Lord Marsden, I am prepared to prove this fact—nay, I can point out the very house, selected for the purpose, where the momentous words were spoken. And this young man, known as and brought up as the son of Sybilla Mgrave and Captain De Vere, is easily and positively to be proved as the heir of the title and estates of Marsden."

"Great Heaven, I thank thee!" murmured the nobleman, his very brain reeling, and his senses wandering to the far regions of the past. "My son, my son!—the blessing is too much—too much!"

Once more his head drooped on Rupert's shoulder, and the father and son were locked in each other's arms, while it might well be doubted which was the more overcome and bewildered at the sudden revelation.

"Lord Marsden, there are shadows in the brightest joys, poison in the sweetest cup," said the voice of her who had first awakened him to a keener sense of the wrong he had done, and the vague, wild hope that all was not dead and hopeless to his scarred senses.

"If, as I believe, the wrongs of Sybilla Mgrave can be atoned and redressed to her living son, what say you to the injuries of Inez Montero, and the wretched fate of her child? The sins of youth will visit old age, and even within this building, within earshot of your exultation, is one whose presence should cover you with penitence and grief. Come with me, and gaze at the living image of her you loved, and destroyed."

The viscount obeyed as by some irresistible impulse, and in another moment he stood in the apartment where Madeline—soothed into unconsciousness by her lover's tender care—was weeping out her bitter agony on his shoulder whose love was her sole possession on earth.

"Lord Marsden, do you doubt my words now? Can you look at that injured girl, whom I have spent years in seeking and in striving to avenge, and not shrink from the reproach of the betrayed mother who gazes at you from her child's eyes, upbraids you by her lips? Poor, neglected, forlorn—it is no thanks to you that she is the chosen of an honourable man, the heiress of a princely fortune, and her noble nature has preserved her from the temptations that might have sunk her below the very pale of womanhood."

Madeline had sprung up from Philip's support, weak and fragile as she was; those words would well nigh have arrested a dying spirit from its flight.

"Robina, are you raving? Is this my father?"

"Yes, Madeline, Montero, for, alas! you have no claim to any but your mother's name. This erring man, the father of Rupert De Vere, the husband of Sybilla Mgrave, is also your parent, the betrayer of your mother. It is for you to say whether the heiress of Rose Mount, the saviour of his son, and his future daughter, can extend her noble forgiveness to her erring parent, and cast a veil of oblivion over her mother's wrongs."

"My child, my child, image of her I loved and mourned, canst thou forgive one to whom thou owest thy being? canst thou smoothe the last years of an old and broken-hearted man?" sobbed Lord Marsden, sinking at the girl's feet and clasping his hands in supplicating agony.

"Listen, Madeline," interposed Rupert. "For my sake—for the sake of that dear, noble girl who has vied with you in self-sacrifice, and even incurred deeper disgrace and suffering, for Gertrude Mgrave's sake, to whom you will be a beloved and honoured sister, yield to our father's prayer. It is human to err, to forgive is divine. Your brother prays mercy for a father."

"Father! brother!—oh, it is too sweet to hear such words," murmured Madeline, sinking on Lord Marsden's neck, and bathing his white locks with her warm tears. "Spare! If the mother in whose name I pardon can look down on us she will speak through her child the message of forgiveness for the past."

There was silence for a few minutes.

Rupert and Philip raised the old nobleman from his prostrate position and placed him in a large chair,

while Madeline knelt at his feet, and even Robina's stern features were moistened with large tear drops.

"Child," she said, "there needs little but your likeness to your deceased mother to establish your birth, but, if you display to your newly found father the locket you have ever worn since you could bear its weight, he will recognize the gift he made to my ill-fated cousin on the very day of your birth. It bears your and her and his monogram entwined, and, on the reverse the Star of India, in the rich pearls which your native land bears in such abundance to its children. The stones in the chain that accompanied it have been abstracted by the felon hand that would have stolen alike happiness, honour, and wealth."

Madeline drew from her bosom the jewel that she had preserved through so many reverses and hardships, and Lord Marsden gazed at it through blinding tears.

"Inez, Inez—I will strive to atone to thy child!" he murmured. "And you, my noble boy," he added, turning to Rupert, "Heaven will reward you for thus generously adopting as a sister the offspring of her whom the son of Sybilla Mgrave might well shrink from as an interloper and an alien."

"But who would be cherished as the most precious gift of Heaven by one at least who can appreciate her," said Philip, proudly. "Lord Marsden, you have not yet given your sanction to my suit for this dear girl. Will you trust me with the treasure?"

"Not as heiress of Rose Mount, Philip," interposed the girl, quickly; "that will never be mine. It is the price of blood—I could never touch it. The heritage of the Mgraves will return to Sybilla's heir."

"Not so, my child," said Lord Marsden, sadly. "You scarcely yet comprehend my full baseness. When I married Sybilla I believed her the heiress of those vast estates, but it became known to me that, owing to an irregularity in a mixed marriage between a Catholic and a Protestant, she was not a lawful child, and that discovery turned the scale in my wavering mind. There had been but one marriage of her parents, instead of two. At least no proof of any other was to be found."

"Thus, you see, my sister, you cannot evade the inheritance," said Rupert, with a sad smile. "It was bequeathed to the discoverer of Hilda Mgrave's murderer, and therefore you are its heiress and a worthy mistress of my maternal lands and wealth."

Madeline's face beamed more brightly than during that agitating scene as she shook her head.

"No, my brother, no. It was not Mr. Mgrave's to bequeath. Thank Heaven, I can remove the last vestige of a stain from your name and lineage, albeit mine must rest still in such shadow and gloom. By a strange chance the certificate of the very second marriage of which your—our—father has told us he was unaware, fell into my hands, and was carefully preserved from the destruction that might have attended it. Rose Mount and Brierfield and their vast wealth are yours by right, not by my renunciation of them."

"Father, do you give me right over this inheritance of my mother's; is it mine to dispose of at will?" asked Rupert, anxiously, of the bewildered peer.

"It is hers—yours. I would not touch one shilling of the wealth that I so basely coveted," replied the viscount. "My son, I think I guess your generous purpose, and it will bring a blessing on your head such as no gold can convey."

"My purpose is only justice," returned Rupert, taking Madeline's hand in his and placing it in Philip's. "Dacre, take the bride you have so nobly chosen for herself alone, and with her that heritage that is doubly hers as the vindicator of my own Gertrude's innocence and my own only and beloved sister. Rose Mount will be purified from its stain by the virtue and the self-sacrifice of its young heiress and the disinterested love of its new lord."

Little remains to be told of the career of those whose fates appeared to be cemented and united by the discovery of the snapt link and its momentous results.

Ere the weddings which united Rupert Lestrangle and Philip Dacre to their long and sorely tried brides were solemnized some sweet though saddened months elapsed in deference to Madeline's sensitive delicacy, and for the full re-establishment of her own and Gertrude's shattered health. And in the interval the iniquities of Julius Andrews and the whole mystery of the mortgaged deeds and stolen diamonds were fully brought to light.

But Madeline's earnest intercession prevented the just punishment which should have descended on his head, lest the already disgraced name of Aubrey should be again dragged before the light and made the theme of gossiping tongues.

The jewels were reclaimed, and thus some of the nauter's ill-gotten plunder disgorged from his greed. The claim he advanced was withdrawn, and "The

Larches" rescued from his grip, which was perhaps as severe a chastisement to his avaricious mind as he could have experienced.

The small domain thus freed was settled by Madeline on Robina as her residence for life, and the weird cousin of the betrayed Brazilian learned gentleness and peace in her last days, from the grateful blessings thus lavished on her by her sweet relative. And Bernard Thorne—the eccentric, passionate disappointed man who had at once been Gertrude's preserver and betrayer—did not survive the revulsion of feeling which the events of her trial produced in a shattered frame.

It was the day before that fixed for the double bridal when Gertrude was informed that a strange-looking woman desired to see her for a few minutes, but would give no other message but that she came from one who would never send another in this world.

Gertrude's nerves were still scarcely strengthened from the shock they had undergone, but the presence of her betrothed was in itself a bulwark against the envious attacks of fate, and she consented to see the intruder, on condition of the interview being in his presence.

Ere many minutes elapsed the tall, gaunt form of Hannah Warner entered, with a small packet in her hand, and a deep mourning dress draping her whole figure, and shading her wrinkled face.

"I'm glad you admitted me, young lady," she said, in her harsh tones, that were perhaps embittered by grief, "for I've no one but you who would ever bestow a thought on my poor master. Now he's gone, and, with all his faults, I do believe he loved you till he was well nigh crazed, being getting on to his dotage, I suppose. And he never held up his head after that sad business—which came out all right for you, of course. And, as he lay on his death-bed, he bade me give you this when he was gone, and tell you to pray for one who had missed an angel's blessing, and behaved himself like a fiend. That was the words, and he made me say them over and over again, and promise to repeat them to you. So I've done his bidding, miss, and here's the packet, and an old woman's blessing be on you in your new estate, for you'd enough to bear in the old."

And ere Gertrude could even reply she was gone, as if afraid that the mission thus executed might be in vain, and the small bequest refused by the injured and unconscious love of poor Bernard Thorne's wayward brain.

Gertrude opened the packet. It contained a highly finished miniature of herself and Rupert, evidently the work of long and anxious skill, and set round with diamonds and pearls, with a jewelled inscription on the reverse:

"A bridal gift from the dead, to one who is too much of angel mould to refuse pardon to one who loved not wisely but beyond his reason, and died, to expiate his madness in the grave."

The bride of Rupert Lestrangle bedewed the poor artist's legacy with hallowed and forgiving grief that her bridegroom honoured and shared, even as he dried the tears with his tender and loving caress.

THE END.

THE MYSTIC EYE OF HEATHCOTE.

CHAPTER XXIII.

I thought thy bride-bed to have decked, sweet maid,
And not t' have strewed thy grave. *Hamlet.*

THERE were scores of inquiries within the hour for beautiful Beatrice. She was nowhere to be seen in all the gorgeous length of the festive halls, nor could she be found in the ranks of the dancers. As the ball drew towards its close, and the "wee, wee, wee" went by, surprise deepened into anxious wonder.

Lord Glandore, remembering that he had seen her last with Lord Remington, went in search of the young nobleman; but, strange to tell, his lordship had also vanished.

The guests began to draw their own inferences; and Lord Glandore, white with wrath, went to Lady Heathcote. He found her painfully excited, but she suggested that a more thorough search should be made. Beatrice was assuredly somewhere about the premises—in one of the greenhouses, no doubt.

Lord Glandore made the search suggested, and found his diamonds, but not his betrothed.

Meanwhile Lady Heathcote sought her daughter's chamber, and there the mystery was explained. She found the drawers rifled, the wardrobe topsy-turvy, and a tiny note on the table, addressed to herself.

"I have gone," it ran, "and it will be useless to pursue me, for before another sunset I shall be Lord Remington's wife."

The frantic mother did not pause to read another word, but with a face like death, and a cry that froze the blood of all who heard it, she rushed down to

the glittering drawing-room. Lord Glandore met her in the doorway, and, grasping her arm, drew her aside.

"For Heaven's sake, madam—" he began, but she cut him short.

"Order the horses," she gasped, "the fast bays—quick, Lord Glandore, there's not a single instant to lose. She's gone with Remington. Oh, for the love of Heaven, don't delay, we must overtake them. A marriage between them would be revolting—horrible!"

"Calm yourself, Lady Heathcote," said his lordship, quietly, holding her hands in his firm grasp; "there is no need of all this haste, no necessity to follow your daughter at all. Why not leave her to the fate she has chosen?"

But she tore herself from him with a shriek of agony.

"Leave her to the fate she has chosen?" she cried; "she deserves it, but you don't know, Lord Glandore, you never can know what that fate would be. The bare thought makes me giddy and faint. Stand out of my way. Ho, here, Simpkins!"

The valet was at her side in a breath.

"Order the fast bays and the lightest carriage," she cried; "and find out when the next train for the North leaves; do you understand, Simpkins?"

The valet bowed.

"Then don't waste a moment, it's a matter of life and death."

"A matter of life and death," mused Lord Glandore as she flew past him to make her preparations; "what can she mean?"

Half an hour later, without even pausing to leave an apology or explanation for her astonished guests, Lady Heathcote was flying northward as fast as steam could carry her. If there had been a murder instead of a marriage to be prevented, she could not have evinced more anxiety and horror.

All through the remaining hours of the night, till the stars faded, and the red dawn began to glow above the brown Devon hills, she sat, white and still, and speechless, with her hands tightly locked to keep down the impatience that consumed her.

At every station Simpkins went out to make inquiries, and found that they were on the right track, and the runaways only a few leagues ahead of them.

On, and on, never pausing for a single instant, till the day, that had dawned upon this wild pursuit, was waning, and the sunset blazed over Wimmermere, and far in the purple distance glittered the opal waters of the Solway and the rugged summits of the Cheviot hills.

But after all their efforts they reached Gretna Green too late. The marriage was over, and Lord Remington had gone, with his bride, down to Mortlake Towers, in the county of Cumberland.

Lady Heathcote grew, if possible, a shade whiter when Simpkins brought her this intelligence.

"Married!" she cried, sinking feebly into a seat.

"Married to him! Great Heaven!"

But the next instant she was on her feet again.

"Come," she said; "we must follow them! Down to Mortlake, Simpkins, and for every moment you gain I will reward you liberally."

Mortlake Towers was an old country seat, formerly owned by an uncle of the young Lord Remington, and bequeathed to him at his uncle's death. It was an imposing, picturesque old place, rich in historic legends and associations, and surrounded by leagues of alluvial land, quite a snug little heritage of itself; but the thriftless and profligate young nobleman had left it wholly neglected, save when he took the fancy to run up for a week's shooting, or to have a carouse with a party of dissipated friends.

But, contemplating making Beatrice his wife, he had determined to take her thither for a short stay till the storm of opposition and indignation had blown over, and he had succeeded in bullying his father into forgiving him for the step he had taken. For to tell the truth Sir Rutledge stood a good deal in awe of his wild and reckless son, and made but a feeble pretence of ruling or restraining him, and the graceless young scamp anticipated but little trouble in getting his father's consent to establish himself amid the splendours of Remington Court.

Accordingly, until that could be done, he took the Lady Beatrice to Mortlake Towers, and thither Lady Heathcote followed them.

It was verging fast on midnight when the vehicle that Simpkins had hired at the Mortlake station rolled up the somewhat gloomy avenue that led to the Towers; and Lady Heathcote, half dead with fatigue and anxiety, lay back upon the cushion, absolutely panting for breath.

The valet observed her with irrepressible curiosity, keeping his horses on the stretch in the meantime with an eye to the reward he had been promised.

They drew up before the ponderous arched gateway, and the weary woman uttered a sigh of infinite relief as sounds of music and revelry floated out upon the frosty air.

Simpkins assisted her to alight, and supported her up the mossy, granite steps. Then he rang a startling peal at the grand entrance, and at the same instant a hoarse clock away up in the lonesome towers struck the midnight hour. A footman ushered them into a gloomy hall.

"Where is Lord Remington?" questioned Lady Heathcote, breathlessly.

"In the drawing-room, madam," the footman replied, pointing towards a glittering door, from which the festive sounds proceeded.

"And his bride, the Lady Beatrice?" she continued.

"Has gone up to her chamber," replied the wondering footman.

"Then conduct me thither at once," gasped Lady Heathcote, "for I am her mother."

The man hesitated, staring half affrighted at her ghastly face; but while he stood irresolute she pushed him aside and glided up the oaken stairs with flying feet.

The housekeeper had done her best to make one chamber at least fitting for the occasion, and in this room, which was lofty and spacious, and hung with silken drapery, before a blazing fire the young bride sat.

She had thrown aside her travelling robes, and put on an exquisite robe de chambre made of white cashmere and heavily embroidered. Her dainty feet, encased in satin slippers, rested on the polished rim of the fender. Her hands were locked across her knees, and her wild, wondrous, bewitching face wore an expression of mingled expectation and regret. Standing on the threshold of this chamber, Lady Heathcote looked in upon her beautiful child, and a sudden gush of tears filled her eyes.

Wicked, and heartless, and cruel as this woman was she was not utterly lost to all human feeling; the mother instinct in her breast was strong and tender, and for a moment she stood there dreading to strike the blow that she knew would be so sharp and cruel. Standing thus, she heard Lord Remington's voice below, and the sound made her nerves like steel. She advanced with a steady step. Beatrice rose and faced her.

"Mother!"

"Beatrice!"

"Why have you come?"

"To save you from a fate worse than death."

"I am Lord Remington's wife."

"His bride, but you can never be more to him."

You must come home with me, Beatrice."

The girl broke into a scornful laugh.

"Come home with you, and keep my engagement with Glandore," she sneered; "tis quite likely. You've come on a bootless errand, mother, and your best plan is to go back at once. I always hated Lord Glandore, and I would turn gipsy, and live in the lanes, sooner than be his wife. I'm not over-fond of Remington, but I've taken him for better or worse—and there he comes! Don't you hear his step on the stairs? Go, I entreat you, mother. Don't let him find you here."

But Lady Heathcote advanced and grasped her daughter's arm.

The girl made an effort to free herself, but her mother held her fast, and, putting her lips close to her ear, uttered a few words in a low, intense whisper.

Beatrice stood, white and speechless, her eyes dilating with horror.

"It is false," she gasped, at last; "it is utterly false."

"It is true—I swear it," replied her mother, solemnly.

"And you never told me—never warned me! Oh, mother, mother!"

She crossed the room with an unsteady step, pausing before a table littered with costly trifles, among which was a slender Italian dagger, richly set with jewels.

At this moment Lord Remington entered the chamber, and, seeing Lady Heathcote, stood amazed. "Mother," said Beatrice, "I told you that night when you forced me to wear Lord Glandore's diamonds that the consequences would rest on your head—and they do—this is your work."

Swift as thought, before her mother or Lord Remington divined her purpose, she snatched the jewelled dagger from the table and plunged it hilt-deep in her heart.

Lord Remington caught her as she fell, but she only drew one shivering gasp, and all was over! Beautiful Beatrice—she who had been wedded for an hour—was dead!

CHAPTER XXIV.

And oft, though wisdom wake, suspicion sleeps
At wisdom's gate, and to simplicity
Resigns her charge, while goodness thinks no ill
Where no ill seems. *Milton.*

On the self-same day, and a desolate, dreary day it was, all the Cumberland hills drenched in weeping

raints, and the waters of Windermere and Solway black and sullen, and tossed into mad fury by the wailing, winter blast that was abroad—on this self-same day, that saw the mournful cortege pass out from Mortlake Towers, bearing the remains of ill-fated Beatrice to her last resting-place, a close carriage drove out from the sequestered grounds of the old convent, and struck into the highway that led through Lombardy towards the region of the Alps.

In this carriage were three persons, Father Anselm, Sister Dorothea, one of the superior nuns, of the Convent of the Sacred Heart, and Lady Grace Heathcote.

They were setting out on a long journey, or pilgrimage rather, away up to the monastery of St. Gothard, which nestled under the very shadow of the Alps.

Lady Grace, as we know, after hearing of the death of her absent lover, had fully determined to shut herself and her sorrows within the holy cloisters of the church; and the Convent of the Sacred Heart was her choice.

She dearly loved the picturesque old place, built on its rocky bulwarks above the sea, and surrounded by fragrant groves of orange and olive and citron; she loved the mellow, purple skies, the golden sunsets, and silver, song-sweet nights; and with a kind of adoration she regarded the gentle mother superior, with her tender, saintly wisdom, and the quiet sisterhood of silent, meek-eyed nuns.

The Convent of the Sacred Heart was her choice, her safe asylum, where life's fierce trials and sorrows could never reach her.

But Father Anselm, as we have said, was a friar of the St. Bernard order, and very zealous indeed in regard to his own institutions.

Upon finding that his pupil was making her arrangements to enter the Italian convent he set himself to work to lead her in another direction.

He described, in the most glowing and attractive manner, the Alpine monasteries in which his life had been passed, and especially the Monastery of St. Gothard; picturing the grand and wonderful scenery by which it was surrounded, and expatiating with zealous fervour on the intense religious faith that characterized its inmates. He was very sure, he said, that Lady Grace would prefer this convent to any other one, if she could only reside for a short time within its walls.

He entreated her, for the sake of the delightful journey, and the religious instruction she would gain, and in order to truly test her preference for the Sacred Heart, to make a short pilgrimage up to St. Gothard before she took the veil.

Lady Grace consented readily to Father Anselm's request. If he thought it would be right and pleasant, she was willing enough to make the journey. Accordingly, accompanied by the good father himself, and by Sister Dorothea, she set out, leaving the Sacred Heart on that self-same wintry day that saw the unfortunate Beatrice borne out from Mortlake Towers.

Lady Heathcote caused her ill-fated child to be taken to Italy, and buried in the vault, where her father slept, at Brignoli Villa. Then she went back to London; but having no heart for the gaieties of the season, she made preparations for a speedy return to Heathcote Abbey.

In all these days of death and desolation she kept her secret well, never hinting at the terrible cause of Beatrice's death. Only once she had spoken to Lord Remington in regard to it; and then, in reply to his accusations and reproaches, she simply asserted that Beatrice never could have been his wife, and further added that, under the circumstances, she rather rejoiced at than regretted her death.

The dissolute young lord uttered fearful imprecations, and even went so far as to use threats against Lady Heathcote's life, all of which she met with a tender, sorrowful patience that was astonishing to behold.

After a time the violence of his rage and disappointment spent itself, and he settled back into his old habits of dissipation and self-indulgence.

His poor father, leading a life of heart-broken seclusion down at the Hermitage, had ceased to remonstrate with his graceless son, and indeed resigned all hope of his reformation; but at this crisis in affairs he made arrangements for doubling his yearly allowance, and earnestly entreated him to go abroad; and the suggestion chancing to suit the young gentleman's inclinations, he agreed, and took ship for Egypt just three weeks after this fatal and ill-starred marriage.

Now let us return to our travellers, who are journeying from the sunny vales of fair Italia towards the cloud-clapped summits of eternal winter.

Lady Grace found the journey very pleasant, for Father Anselm was a rare companion, and pointed out every object of interest and beauty.

On the first night after their departure they put

up at a picturesque little inn on the borders of Lombardy.

On the second they begged for shelter at an old Capuchin convent; and the meek nuns and sleek-faced friars paused, as they filed out to tell their beads in answer to the tolling bell, to gaze in admiring wonder on the sweet young girl, who sat so still and patient, with her lily hands clasped, and her lovely face wearing such a look of rapt devotion.

Years after, when the wonderful story of the lost Heiress of Heathcote travelled down to the old convent, the nuns remembered her, and gossiped over the romantic story, as they sat at their embroidery, with an interest as keen as that experienced by the merriest of the peasant girls in the neighbouring vineyards.

On the third day our travellers started forward again, and before sunset they had passed the purple confines of the land of song, and were away up in the Alpine region of Mt. St. Gothard.

They would soon reach the monastery, said Father Anselm, but for the night they would put up at Lindau Castle—a frowning old structure that loomed up in their very pathway.

Lady Grace made no objection, and they drew up in front of the ancient, arched entrance.

A very peculiar-looking personage answered Father Anselm's imperative summons—a middle-aged woman, with a face and a pair of eyes that might have been carved from stone for all the life or expression they possessed.

Of course they could have shelter; and they entered, passing through a long and gloomy hall, and up a flight of seemingly endless stairs, and finally into a square, prison-like chamber, whose windows, curiously enough, were crossed with heavy iron bars.

"Now, my child," said Father Anselm, wheeling a couch close to the fire, "lie down and rest, for I know you are thoroughly tired. This good woman will bring you some supper soon; meanwhile, I shall send Sister Dorothea on to St. Gothard to prepare them for our arrival on the morrow, and take a little glance about town. You'll not be lonely, my daughter?"

Oh, no, Grace would not be lonely! She sank down upon the couch with a sigh of weariness, and Father Anselm departed, closing the door behind him, and turning the key in the lock with a sharp, rasping sound, that fairly chilled the girl's blood.

(To be continued.)

A DARING GAME; OR, NEVA'S THREE LOVERS.

CHAPTER XV.

As Neva recognized the youngest of her three guardians, as they rode up the avenue of Hawkhurst at a leisurely pace, a strange embarrassment seized upon her.

The horsemen had not yet seen her in the twilight and the shadow of the shrubbery, and she proposed a return to the drawing-room.

Rufus Black assented, and they passed in at the open French window, to which there was direct access from the marble terrace.

The drawing-room was full of shadows. Artrass sat in the recess of a window, silent and immovable, and Lady Wynde and Craven Black were in the second portion of the triple-arched apartment, completely hidden from view, and their low whispers barely penetrated to the outer room.

Lady Wynde, hearing her step-daughter's return, came forth, rang for lights, and ordered the lace curtains to be dropped.

A score of wax candles were presently glowing in their polished silver sconces, and a couple of moon-like lamps dispensed a mellow radiance that penetrated to every corner of the triple room. The curtains, fluttering in the soft night breeze admitted the perfumed air.

Craven Black, satisfied that his tête-à-tête with Lady Wynde was over for the present, sauntered into the outer room to make the acquaintance of the young heiress.

He had thought of Neva as an insipid, affected, weak-headed young lady, who would be a mere puppet in his hands and those of Lady Wynde. His surprise may be imagined when he beheld a slender, spirited girl, with eyes of red gloom, brown hair tinted with the sunshine, scarlet lips, and a piquant face, full of an irresistible witchery and sauciness—a girl so bright and keen of intellect, so resolute and strong in herself, that he wondered that she could ever have been imposed upon by even his skillfully forged letter.

"Neva, my dear," said Lady Wynde, "allow me to present to you the Honourable Craven Black—one of your dear papa's friends, and consequently yours and mine."

Neva acknowledged the introduction by a bow of her haughty little head, and a smile so warm and sweet that Craven Black was captivated by it.

Any friend of her late father's had a peculiar claim upon Neva's friendship, and Craven Black resolved to elaborate the small fiction, and coin agreeable little anecdotes of his relations to her father, so that the heiress would be inspired with a liking for him.

Before time had been granted for more than the usual commonplaces incident to an introduction the three guardians of Miss Wynde were announced by the footman, and were ushered into the drawing-room.

Sir John Freise came first—a tall, stately old gentleman, with white hair and closely cropped whiskers, distinguished for his old-fashioned courtliness of bearing, and noted throughout Kent for his unswerving integrity.

Mr. Atkins, the attorney, came next, looking more than ordinarily insignificant of person, his bald head shining, his honest face flushed to redness. He was not fine looking, or well shaped, but, like Sir John, he was a man of inviolable integrity and honesty of character, and many years of service to Sir Harold Wynde had inspired him with a genuine affection for the family, and given him, as one might say, a personal interest in its prosperity.

Lastly, and because he preferred to come last, was young Lord Towyn, as handsome as any knight of chivalry, his golden hair tossed back from his noble forehead, his blue eyes glowing, and a warm smile playing about his tawny-moustached lips.

Neva recognized her guardians, and welcomed them all in turn with hand-shakings and quiet greetings. Lady Wynde introduced the Blacks, father and son, to the new-comers.

"This is scarcely a business visit, Miss Neva," said Sir John Freise, leading his young hostess to a sofa with old-fashioned gallantry. "Lord Towyn and Mr. Atkins have been closeted with me to-day, discussing your affairs in the way of rents and leases, but it is our business to spare you these details, and it is your province to enjoy the fruits of our labours," and he smiled paternally upon her. "We have come to welcome you back to the home of your fathers, and to express the hope that you will fill worthily the place your father has resigned to you."

"I will try to walk in papa's steps," returned Neva, lowly and gravely.

"Lady Freise and my girls will call upon you to-morrow," said Sir John. "They sent their love to you, and would have come to-day, but that I begged them to allow you a day to rest in after your journey. You will be inundated with visitors, Miss Neva. The lady of Hawkhurst will not be permitted to hide her light under a bushel! Lady Freise has already projected no end of fêtes, balls, and dinners in your honour, and she has persuaded our young friend Lord Towyn to spend a month with us, so that you will not lack an escort, should you desire one."

"You are very thoughtful, Sir John," said Lady Wynde, with a curl of her lip. "Miss Wynde, however, can never lack for an escort. I fancied, when I saw you three gentlemen enter in such formidable array, that some horrid red-tape business was about to be transacted. I did not know indeed but that you had come with some official suggestions as to the management of the household, or to discuss the matter of pin-money."

"All that is settled by Sir Harold's will," said Mr. Atkins, quietly. "The baronet was very explicit in his directions, and assigned to Miss Wynde an extraordinarily liberal allowance until she is of age, when of course she will come into full possession of her magnificent revenues. Your residence at Hawkhurst was also provided for, Lady Wynde, with a very handsome allowance in recognition of your services to Miss Wynde as friend and chaperone."

"And are we compelled to remain at Hawkhurst, whether we will or not?" demanded the baronet's widow.

"Certainly not," replied Mr. Atkins. "You and Miss Wynde are free to reside where you please, but it is natural to suppose you will prefer for a stated residence the seat of the family grandeur."

Lady Wynde made no reply, but her glittering eyes became speculative.

The visitors, while courteous to her ladyship, bestowed the larger share of their attention upon the young heiress to whom their visit was directed. They had intended to make but a brief call, but the time flew by as if on wings. Neva talked with them with cheerful gaiety or gravity, as the subject rendered befitting, and at Sir John's request played and sang for him.

Lord Towyn leaned over the piano, turning the music leaves, a rapt expression on his face, and there was not one present, save Neva, who failed to see that he was already the lover of the beautiful young heiress.

Rufus Black recognized the fact with an actual jealousy. He said to himself with a furious bitterness that his happiness and Lally's had been ruined

for the sake of Neva Wynde, and he would not be cheated of fortune and bride by the young earl.

Craven Black sat apart, his forehead shaded by his hand, his light eyes fairly devouring the glowing loveliness of Neva's face.

He was a world-worn, blasé, dissolute man, incapable of honour and fidelity, even to the woman who had sinned and perilled so much for him. As he sat there he contrasted Neva's spirited and dainty beauty with the maturer and lesser charms of Lady Wynde, and strange thoughts and hopes awoke to life within his breast.

"My fate is not so settled as to be irrevocable," he thought, within himself. "I wish I had seen the girl before I forged that letter. Why should I throw myself away upon four thousand a year and a woman of the world, when, by skillful manoeuvring, I might gain seventy thousand per annum and a bride like a houri? I will study my chances. If there is a chance for me with Neva, I will run the race with these others and win the prize."

So, all unknown and unsuspected by Neva, she had three aspirants to her hand among those who listened to her music.

Of these three lovers one alone was pure and true and altogether worthy of her love. Only one loved her without a shadow of greed, and that one was the young Lord Towyn.

But which, should she choose among these three, would she prefer? To whose fate, of these three, would she link her own? Would a regard for the supposed wishes of her dead father outweigh the desires of her own heart? These were problems which time alone could solve.

After the music Lady Wynde rang for coffee, which was brought in and dispensed to the guests. Sir John Freise, waxing eloquent upon the degeneracy of modern society, held Lady Wynde captive. Rufus Black wandered down the length of the drawing-rooms, looking with an artist's eye at the glorious pictures upon the walls. Mr. Atkins and Craven Black engaged in conversation, and Artress sat apart, silent and observing, as usual.

Lord Towyn and Neva also looked at the pictures and talked of their childhood days, growing animated over their pleasant reminiscences.

The young earl gradually drew his hostess into the great conservatory, a huge glass dome at the bottom of the drawing-rooms.

Here the air was heavy with fragrance. Stalks of white lilies sprang from the side walls, bearing pistils of red and dancing light. Aisles of tropical shrubbery, thick with golden fruitage or snowy blossoms, or both at once, stretched on either side.

A feathery palm reared its plumed head in the very centre of the dome. Vines trailed and festooned themselves from floor to roof, dropping perfume from fiery chalice.

Through the light foliage of a well-trimmed jungle of flowers and leaves gleamed a great mellow moon of light, reminding one of a Brazilian forest on a moonlit summer night.

"Do you remember when we were here last, Neva?" asked Lord Towyn as they paused beside the marble basin of a great fountain, and Neva idly dropped rose petals upon the crystal waters. "We were standing upon this very spot, with only that marble Naiad to bear us company, and you and I were but children when we entered upon our childish betrothal. How long ago that seems! Do you remember it, Neva?"

The rose petals between the girl's white fingers were not brighter than her cheeks.

"Yes, I remember," she said, drooping her head over the bright waters. "What precious children we were, Lord Towyn."

The young earl sighed.

"The utterance of my title shows the great gulf between the now and the then," he said. "I was no lord in those days, and you called me Arthur. Now when your name comes instinctively to my lips I must remember that you are no longer Neva, but Miss Wynde. Why will you not call me by the old name, and let us take up our old friendship where we left off, instead of beginning anew as strangers?"

"I am willing," said Neva, frankly, yet shyly. "I—I look upon you as a brother, Arthur, and you may call me Neva."

Strange to say, the permission thus granted did not seem to delight Lord Towyn. His warm blue eyes clouded over with a singular discontent, and a pained expression gathered about his mouth.

"I don't want to be considered as your brother, Neva," he declared, after a minute's struggle with himself. "I would prefer to begin again as your mere acquaintance. A fraternal relation toward you would be insupportable. For years I have dreamed and hoped that I might some time win your love. I am no longer a boy, Neva, and I love you with a man's love. I have carried your picture for years next my heart. I have worshipped you in secret ever since our childhood. I do not know

how I have been betrayed into this confession, Neva," he added. "I did not intend to be so premature. I do not yet ask you to love or to marry me, but I do ask you to allow me to become your suitor."

Neva's heart thrilled under this ardent and impassioned declaration as under an angel's touch. Then a sudden pall seemed to descend upon her soul, and her face grew white, as she faltered:

"It cannot be, Arthur."

Lord Towyn shivered with sudden pain.

"You—you are not promised to another, Neva?"

"No!"

"You love another then?"

"Oh, no, no!"

"Is it that I have startled you by my premature confession, Neva?" he cried, tremulously. "Dolt that I am! I have thought and dreamed of you so much that I had forgotten how perfect a stranger I must seem to you after all these years of separation. You cannot take up the old life where we dropped it. I was foolish to have expected it. Do not let my undue haste prejudice you against me. It will not, Neva!"

"No, Arthur," answered the girl, lowly and hesitatingly.

"And you will give me a chance to retrieve my error?" he demanded, eagerly. "Perhaps in time you may grow to love me, Neva!"

"Arthur," said the young girl, nerving herself to tell him of her father's supposed last wishes, "I have something to say to you. Papa—"

Her voice died out in a half-sob.

"Well, darling?" said the young earl, bending nearer to her, his eyes burning with the love that filled his being. "What of Sir Harold? Did you fancy that he would not have approved our love?"

Neva nodded a dumb assent.

"And if Sir Harold had approved, do you think you could learn to love me?" whispered the young earl, softly, his eager breath fanning the girl's cheek.

Neva's silence was interpreted as a favourable answer.

"Before my father died," said Lord Towyn, gently, "he told me that it had long been his wish and that of Sir Harold to unite the two families in our marriage. Sir Harold was in India at the time of my father's death, and was not likely, at that distance from home, to have contracted an aversion to me, or to have formed other plans for your future. You see I am right, Neva, and now I claim to be considered as your suitor. May it not be?"

"Oh, Arthur," the girl murmured, sorely perplexed, "I—"

The story trembled on her lips, but she did not give utterance to it, for at that critical moment Rufus Black entered the conservatory, and came up the flower-bordered aisle with an unmistakable expression of displeasure upon his melancholy face.

Neva started guiltily at his approach, as if she had been wronging him or her dead father in listening to Lord Towyn's avowal of love. But although she moved away from the young earl, she paused under a tropical rose tree and began to gather roses, and her two suitors hovered about her, each recognising in the other a rival.

They were presently joined by Neva's third lover, Craven Black. The last-named looked moodily and jealously at his son and the young earl, and devoted himself so closely to the heiress that, with a feeling of annoyance, Neva presently proposed a return to the drawing-room.

A glance of jealous anger from the eyes of Lady Wynde greeted Craven Black as he re-entered the presence of his betrothed. The baronet's widow began to entertain a suspicion of the disaffection of her lover.

Sir John Freise was the first to propose a departure, and the horses were ordered, and he, with Mr. Atkins and Lord Towyn, took their leave.

Craven Black exchanged a few whispered words with Lady Wynde, appointing an interview for the next morning, then also departed with his son.

They were to walk to Wyndham, and not a word was spoken by either as they strode down the wide avenue and passed out at the lodge gates. Once out upon the highway, Craven Black broke the silence, saying:

"Well, Rufus, how do you like Miss Wynde?"

"She is beautiful—lovely beyond comparison," answered Rufus, enthusiastically. "I never saw a being so witching, so bright, so sweet!"

"You talk like a lover," sneered Craven Black. "One would not believe that you had been lying drunk all day at a low inn through love for another woman."

"You will drive me mad!" ejaculated Rufus, his voice choking suddenly. "How dare you taunt me with my misery and degradation? I did love Lally—I do love her, Heaven knows. But you have separated us. She despises me, and I am thrown upon myself. Why grudge me the little comfort Miss Wynde's presence and smiles give me? If I had never met Lally I should have idolized Miss Wynde. As Lally can never be mine again—my

poor, wronged girl—and I shall go to perdition unless some hand pulls me back—I turn to Miss Wynde as a drowning man might turn to any frail support and cling to it. I—I like her. I could almost say I love her."

"Envious elasticity of youthful affections!" sighed Craven Black, still sneeringly, and speaking in a stilted voice. "You remind me of a child, Rufus, whose doll is smashed to-day, but is equally content with a new one to-morrow. One woman is to you the same as another. It is 'Lalla Rookh' one day, and Miss Wynde the next. 'Extremes meet.'"

Rufus grew terribly angry.

"You talk as if you were dissatisfied with me for obeying your own orders to make myself agreeable to Miss Wynde," he ejaculated. "Do you want her now for yourself?"

Mr. Black hastened to disclaim any such desire. "As to me," said Rufus, with unwonted decision, "I will not be much longer dependent upon you. I will win Miss Wynde and her fortune, or I'll blow my brains out. Lally is lost to me, but all is not lost, as I thought this morning. I like Miss Wynde. I even love her already, strange as it may seem, but I do not and cannot love her as I love poor Lally. But I shall marry her and make her happy. I am desperate, but by no means helpless and hopeless."

Mr. Black maintained a dogged silence during the remainder of the walk. He bade his son good-night coldly upon the inn stairs, and locked himself in his own rooms, muttering:

"The girl has three lovers, for my fickle son really loves her. I must watch my chances, and not loosen my hold upon Octavia until I have made sure of Neva. In default of the greater prize, I must not lose the lesser. It requires some skill to sit upon two stools and not fall between them. I wish I could have foreseen the turn affairs would take, and had inserted my name in that forged letter in place of my son's. I shall have to be pretty keen to do away with the effect of that letter. I would give all I own in the world at present to know which of her three lovers will win the heiress of Hawkhurst."

CHAPTER XVI.

Craven Black and his son met at their late breakfast in the private parlour of the former. The father was himself again, cold, polite, and cynical. The son was sullen and irritable, at war with himself and all mankind. His grief for the loss of his young wife had lost none of its poignancy, although he had avowed himself the suitor for another. His thoughts during the night just past had been all of Lally, and not of Neva. In his dreams, at least, he was still true to the loving heart he had broken.

The pair were sipping their coffee when a waiter brought in Mr. Black's morning paper, just arrived from London. Craven Black unfolded the sheet, and scanned its contents lazily.

"Any news?" inquired Rufus.

"Nothing particular. It's all about a war in prospect between Prussia and France. I never read politics, so I'll skip them. I prefer to read the smaller items. Ah, what is this?"

Craven Black started and changed colour as his eye rested upon a familiar name in an obscure paragraph, under a startling title. His agitation increased as he glanced over the paragraph, taking in its meaning.

"What's the matter?" demanded Rufus. "Any of your acquaintance dead? Any one left you a fortune?"

"It is terrible," said Craven Black, shuddering, and regarding the paper with horrified eyes. "How could she have been so utterly foolish and insane? It was not I who killed her."

"Killed whom? Then some one is dead?"

"Poor girl!" muttered Craven Black, still staring at the paper with wide eyes, as if he read there an accusation of wilful murder. "Poor Lally—"

"Who?"

Rufus leaped to his feet with a shriek on his lips, bounded to his father's side, and snatched the paper in his trembling hands.

"I—I see nothing," he cried. "You shocked me cruelly. I—I thought that Lally—Oh, Heaven!"

He stood as if suddenly frozen, staring as his father had done at an item in a lower corner of the paper—an item which bore the title: "Distressing Case of Suicide. Another unfortunate gone to her death!"

From the midst of this paragraph the name of Lalla Bird stood out with startling distinctness.

Unconsciously to himself, Rufus Black read the brief paragraph aloud in a hoarse, strained, breathless sort of voice, and his father listened with head bent forward, and a horrified look graven on his face as upon stone.

"Last evening," the notice read, "as Constable Rice was pursuing his usual beat, a young woman dashed past him, bonnetless, her hair flying, and ran out upon Waterloo Bridge. She was muttering wildly to herself, and her aspect was that of one beside herself. The officer, comprehending her pur-

pose, rushed after her, but he was too late to arrest her in her dread purpose. She looked back at him, sprang up to the parapet like a flash, and with a last cry upon her lips—a name he could not make out—he precipitated herself into the river. In falling, her head struck a passing boat, mutilating her features beyond all semblance of humanity. She was dead when taken from the water, and will have a pauper's burial unless some one comes forward to claim her remains. No token of her identity was found upon her person, but her handkerchief, floating on the water and picked up afterwards by a boatman, bore the name of Lally Bird. The girl, for she was very young, was pretty, and without doubt belonged to that frail class which more than any other furnishes us suicides."

Rufus Black read this paragraph to the very end, and then the paper fell from his nerveless hands.

"Dead!" he said, hollowly. "Dead!"

"Dead!" echoed his father, hoarsely.

"Dead!" said Rufus Black, turning his burning, terrible eyes upon his father's face. "It was you who killed her! I loved her—I would have been true to her all her days, but you tore us asunder, and drove her to despair, madness, and death. You are her murderer!"

Craven Black started nervelessly, and looked around him.

"Don't, Rufus, don't," he ejaculated, uneasily. "Some one might hear you. The girl is to blame for killing herself, and no one else can be held accountable for it. I offered her money, but she would not take it. It was the landlady who drove her to the rash act. The old woman listened at the door, and suddenly burst in upon us and called the girl some foul name and ordered her out of her house. The girl fled as if pursued by demons. I thought then she meant to kill herself—just as she has done!"

A groan burst from Rufus Black's lips.

"My poor, poor wife!" he moaned. "She was my wife, and she shall not lie in a pauper's grave. I am going up to London—"

"To make an idiot of yourself," interrupted Craven Black, recovering from his shock. "And to-morrow morning the papers will all come out with the romantic story that this girl was your wife, and the story will stick to you all your days. People will say that you drove her to her death. Your chance of becoming master of Hawkhurst will end on the spot. You will be cast out and abhorred. Others as pretty and as good as this girl have been buried at the public expense. Leave her alone."

"I cannot—"

"Suppose you go then? What will you say to the coroner, or magistrate? What excuse will you have for abandoning your wife, as you persist in calling the girl? Will you confess your perjury? Can you stand the cross-questioning, the hedgering, the prying into your life and motives?"

Rufus shrank within himself in a sort of terror. The besetting weakness and cowardice of his nature now paralyzed him.

"I cannot go," he muttered. "Oh, Lally, my lost, wronged wife!"

He dashed from the room, and entered his own, locking his door, and was not visible again that day.

Craven Black attired himself in morning costume and walked over to Hawkhurst. Neva was in the park, and he had a long private interview with Lady Wynde. In returning to his inn he crossed the park, ostensibly to cut short his walk, but really to exchange a few words with the heiress.

He found her in one of the wide shaded paths, but she was not alone. Lord Townyn, on his way to the house, had just encountered her, and they were talking to each other, in utter forgetfulness of any supposed obstacles to their mutual love. Craven Black accosted them, and lingered for a few moments, then pursued his way homeward, while the young couple slowly proceeded toward the house.

Craven Black called at Hawkhurst the next day, and the next, but alone, Rufus remaining obstinately sequestered in his darkened chamber. Neva was busy with visitors, Lady Freise and her daughters, and other friends and neighbours, having hastened to visit the returned heiress. Lord Townyn found excuses to call nearly every day. He was devoting all his energies to the task of wooing and winning Neva, and he pushed his suit with an ardour that brought a cynical smile to Craven Black's lips continually.

There were fêtes given at Freise Hall in Neva's honour, breakfast and lawn parties at other houses, and the young girl found herself in a whirl of gaiety in strong contrast with her late life of seclusion.

During the week that followed the publication of the announcement of Lally Bird's suicide Rufus Black did not cross his threshold. He meditated suicide, and wept and bemoaned his lost darling with genuine anguish. During this week Craven

Black made various overtures to Miss Wynde, uttered graceful compliments to her when Lady Wynde was not within hearing, and threw a lover-like ardour into his tones and countenance when addressing her. But he could not see that he was regarded by her with any favour, and grew anxious that his son should again enter the lists, and win her from Lord Townyn, who seemed to be having the field nearly to himself.

After an energetic talk with his son Craven Black persuaded Rufus to emerge from his retirement and to again visit Hawkhurst. There is a refining influence about grief, and Rufus had never looked so well as when, habited in black, his face pale, thin, and sharp-featured, his eyes full of melancholy and vain regret, he again called upon Neva. The impression he had made upon her upon the occasion of his first visit had been favourable, and it became still more favourable upon this second visit. Neva received the impression, from his steady melancholy and the occasional wildness of his eyes, that he was a genius, and became deeply interested in him.

Add to this interest the influence of the forged letter, which she devoutly believed to have been written by her father now dead, and one will see that even Lord Townyn had in the boy artist a dangerous rival.

Lady Wynde steadily pursued her preparations for her marriage, keeping a keen watch upon her lover, whom she more than suspected of faithlessness to her. She loved him with all her wicked soul, and was anxious to secure him in matrimonial chains, but her engagement to him had not yet been announced, and even Neva did not know of it.

By the exercise of Lady Wynde's influence the Blacks, father and son, were invited to all the parties given in Neva's honour, and Rufus Black and Lord Townyn were ever at the side of the young heiress. Lady Wynde hinted judiciously to a few of her chosen friends that Neva and young Black were informally betrothed, but that the betrothal was still a secret.

As the summer passed and September came, bringing near at hand the time appointed for the marriage of Lady Wynde and Craven Black, both the Blacks, father and son, became uneasy and restless. The former was anxious to try his fate with Neva before committing himself beyond retrieval with her step-mother. Rufus had learned to love the heiress with a genuine affection, not as he had loved Lally, but still with so much of fervour that he believed he could not live without her. His grief for his young wife had not lessened, but time had robbed the blow of its sharpest sting, and he thought of Lally in heaven, while he coveted Neva on earth. He grew anxious to put his faith to the test.

A favourable opportunity was afforded him.

Neva was fond of walking, and frequently took long walks, despite the fact that she had carriages and horses at command. One mild September evening, after her seven-o'clock dinner, she walked over to Wyndham village to purchase at the general dealer's some Berlin wool urgently required for the completion of a sofa pillow, or some such trifle, and sauntered slowly homeward in the gloaming.

Rufus Black, who was idly wandering in the streets at the time, hurried after her and offered his escort, and took charge of her parcel. They walked on together.

As they emerged from the village into the open country Rufus felt that the hour had come in which to learn his fate from Neva's lips. He revolved in his mind a dozen ways of putting the momentous question, but the manner still remained undecided when Neva sat down to rest upon a wayside bank in the very shadow of Hawkhurst Park.

This bank was her favourite halting-place when going on foot to or from Wyndham. It was shaded by a giant oak, and clothed in the softest and greenest turf. Here the earliest primroses blossomed and heart's-ease starred the ground. Near the bank a small private gate opened into the park. Rufus decided in his own mind that this was the spot, and this soft, deepening twilight the hour for the avowal of his love.

There was no one in the park within view to interrupt him; no one coming along the road. With a slight sense of nervous agitation, he even surveyed a wayside thicket that flanked the bank upon one side, as if fearing some tramp might be lurking there within hearing, but he saw nothing to discomfite his projects.

"It's a lovely evening," said Neva, softly, looking up at the shadowing sky and around her at the shadowed earth. "The air is full of balm!"

"Yes, it is lovely," said Rufus, fixing his gaze upon the young girl, as if he meant his remark to apply to her face. "How the time has sped since I first saw you, Miss Neva. Life was very dark to me in those July days, but you have given it a glow and brightness I did not dream that it could ever possess. It seems to me that I never existed until—until I knew you. You cannot fail to know that I love you. I have often thought that you have pur-

posely encouraged my suit. But be that as it may, I love you more than all the world, Miss Neva. Will you be my wife?"

He waited in a breathless suspense for her reply. Neva's face did not flush with joy, as it might have done had the speaker been Lord Townyn. She looked very grave, and into her eyes of red gloom came a sadness that was terrible to see.

"I like you, Rufus," she said, gently, looking beyond him with a strange, far-seeing gaze. "I believe you to be good and honourable—would to Heaven I did not—for then—then—Rufus, I do not know what to say to you. What shall I answer you?"

"Say yes," pleaded Rufus, with the energy of a gathering terror. "Do not refuse me, Neva, I implore you. I am not handsome and titled like Lord Townyn; I am plain and awkward, but I love you with all my soul. I place my fate in your hands. I have it in me to become great and good, and if you will be my wife I will be noble for your sake. But if you cast me off I shall perish. In you are centred all my hopes. Oh, Neva, I beseech you to be merciful to me, and to save me from the utter misery of a life without you. I cannot—cannot live if you cast me off!"

He spoke with an earnestness that went to Neva's soul.

She trembled, as if the burden of responsibility laid upon her were too heavy to be borne. In her uplifted eyes was a wild, beseeching look, as if she called upon her father from his home in heaven to aid her now.

"Remember," said Rufus, desperately, "you are deciding upon my life or death—moral and physical!"

Neva read in the declaration an awful sincerity that made her shudder.

"I must think," she faltered. "I cannot decide so suddenly. Give me a week, Rufus—only a week in which to decide. Oh," she added, under her breath, with a passionate emphasis, "if papa only knew! He would have spared me this."

Rufus assented to the delay with a beaming face. If she had intended to refuse him, he thought, she would have done so on the spot. But she had not refused him, and there was hope. She should be his wife, and he would be master of Hawkhurst yet.

In the midst of his self-gratulations Neva arose and walked slowly onward, grave and sorrowful. Rufus walked beside her with a joyous tread.

When they had passed on into the thickening shadows, and the primrose bank had been left far behind, a ragged, childish figure stirred itself from the farther shadow of the thicket, and a childish face, wan and thin and haggard, with a woman's woe in the great dark eyes, looked after the young pair with an awful horror and despair.

That face belonged to the disowned young wife whom Rufus mourned as dead! The wild and woe-filled eyes were the eyes of Lally Bird!

(To be continued.)

EXCHANGE OF CLIMATE.—The cold weather in the East is rather remarkable when contrasted with our mild season. At the camp at Delhi the cold is intense. Simla is covered with snow one foot deep, and Christmas has been commemorated there this year with blazing fires—English fashion. Throughout the North-West of India the weather is unusually cold. Bombay is cooler than it has been for four or five years. At Shanghai there has been skating.

ENORMOUS ROCK SLIP.—The day after the railway accident at Nice another befell the locality, one less common and more awful in every respect. Between four and five o'clock a fearful booming sound was heard. Many thought at first it was an earthquake, while others imagined it was a gunpowder explosion; but the true cause was soon learnt: a frightful slip had taken place from the enormous rock on which the old chateau is built that divides the old and new town and overhangs the port. Three enormous masses—the smallest 300, the largest 2,500 cubic metres—fell rolling down on to the houses beneath. The awful result may be imagined; the loss of life is not yet known, eighteen bodies only at present having been dug out. The scene was something terrible to behold; a portion of one of the large houses which remains standing shows on each flat the different grade of life of its unhappy occupants, now all equal enough! The heaps of broken furniture that lie strewn about, the clothes, the broken china, the wooden shutters, the trees rent up by their roots, the bricks and mortar, the stones and dirt and dust that cover the space for yards around, tell of the fearful havoc created. Had the first mass of rock not have been stayed by the level of the street in which it crashed down the houses, the whole must have gone through the other row of houses into the port, and then the damage to life and property would have been incalculable.



[LEFT AT HOME.]

DISTRESSINGLY NEAT.

An invitation to visit Mrs. George Stanley, formerly Mary Kirk, an old school companion of mine! Mary had married young and was now mistress of a fine establishment.

"What a nice visit this will be for me," I said to myself.

So, all the while I was making preparations for it I was mapping out a wondrously pleasant chart of my intended excursion, which was elaborately finished and hung in a gilded frame in the gallery of my mind, when the carriage that conveyed me from the station halted before the tasty and rather imposing establishment of my friend, Mrs. George Stanley.

"This compares well with my 'fancy picture,'" I said as I descended from the carriage; "but I wonder whether Mary is absent from home—the house has such a shut-up sort of a look!"

My mind was relieved from the unwelcome surprise by the appearance of my friend at the door in answer to the summons of the bell.

I recognized her at once, though ten years had gone by since her marriage, and she remembered me as readily, and her greeting was cordial.

I followed her into the nicely furnished hall, when she paused with a troubled look, and said:

"Will you be kind enough, Hattie, to use the mat, as it is rather dusty in the streets, and I have a perfect dread of dust?"

I complied with the request, thinking that it must be dusty indeed if in stepping from the carriage to the house sufficient dust had adhered to my boots to soil the carpets; then she led the way into the back parlour, I following with a sort of uncomfortable feeling—a sense of restraint.

Here I found the stuffed chairs, ottomans, and sofa closely covered with linen, the heavy tassels that looped back the rich damask curtains from the windows placed in muslin bags to preserve them, the piano

enveloped with two coverings, the outer one of linen, while the legs of the instrument were dressed with the same untasty material, the paintings, which should have adorned the walls, were disfigured with three thicknesses of varieton, the rich Turkey carpet upon the floor being dotted here and there with woolen looking, and the gas fixtures were as carefully dressed as could be.

It took me some time to discover all this, for the inside blinds were as closely drawn down as the outer ones.

"Mary," I said, in a half-laughing way, "it is as dark as night here. Come, give me a little more light, for I can scarcely tell how you are looking, and I came on purpose to see you."

"I cannot yet," was the cool answer. "By-and-bye, when the sun gets below the hills, I will, but I never draw the blinds in broad daylight, and I always expect my visitors to conform to this rule. You see I am the same plain Mary I was when a girl. Now I will show you to your chamber."

It was a nice, commodious room into which I was shown, with not only the comforts but all the luxuries of modern taste; it was altogether too nice to suit me, for there was no sense of freedom there.

I looked upon the bed with its costly coverings, and thought: "What if I should get a fold or a wrinkle upon these delicate fabrics—what if I should in any way disturb the 'upper-drawer' look of the whole apartment?"

I longed for my own simply furnished chamber at home, where I could be at liberty to throw open my blinds and windows and enjoy the heaven-born gift of fresh, pure air and glorious, health-giving sunlight.

But it was vain for me to wish this, so I dressed myself as well as I might in the artificial daylight, and descended below stairs, where I found my friend's two children—Harry, a pretty, dark-eyed boy of eight, and Lucy, a sweetly fair girl of six—just entering the room.

There was a restrained, half-fearful way, as they came in and met their mother's quick, inquiring glance, that was painful to see.

"Harry, your collar is awry, and, Lucy, your slippers are dusty; go out and wipe them carefully. I am ashamed of your carelessness."

Such was the result of their mother's scrutiny.

The two children left the room to do as they were bidden, and I could see that they felt keenly the censure cast upon them, for they had come to think they could do nothing more reprehensible than to appear with a speck or blemish upon their dress or person in their mother's presence.

Soon afterwards Mr. Stanley, my friend's husband, came in. He was of a large build, noble and manly in his appearance, and I said to myself:

"There is too much force of character and independence in him to submit or to be swayed in the least by this mania of his wife."

But he had not crossed the apartment before I was convinced by his gingerly step and his uncertain manner of placing his hat upon the table, then moving it with a nerveless glance at his better half, that he too stood in fear of trespassing upon the household regulations of his slight, girlish-looking wife; in short, he wore the appearance of—shall I use the homely expression?—a "hen-pecked husband."

Mrs. Stanley left the room to look after the tea, and I enjoyed a pleasant chat with Mr. Stanley, and found him an uncommonly sensible and intelligent man, and could but wonder that he should allow his wife's foolish mania to affect his bearing so sensibly; but, poor man, who does not know that "constant dropping will wear away a stone"?

Before the close of my visit I did not wonder at all, for this was the cause:

"Frederic, one of the legs of your chair is off the blocking"—"Frederic, will you take care to close the door quickly when you come in the street way, so that the flies may not follow you?"—"Frederic, will you read your paper in the kitchen, so that we may not have to draw a blind here and fade the carpet?"

In short, time would fail me to enumerate all the causes of complaint she found in him. His hard labour had bought and furnished the beautiful house he called home, yet it was not a home to him or his children—they would have been far happier in an humble cottage, with bare floors and whitewashed walls, so that they had enjoyed liberty to speak and move and breathe freely.

"Why, Mary," said Mr. Stanley, when his wife entered to call us to tea, "you look heated. What has been the trouble?"

"I am heated and vexed besides," was the fretful reply. "We must look for another servant soon. Such a chase as I have had! That careless girl had left the dining-room door open for a moment, and there were the flies making themselves quite at home. I never in all my housekeeping had that number of flies in my dining-room. I am so tired and heated now, 'driving' them, that I do not feel able to do another thing to-night. We must look out for somebody else, Frederic."

"But, Mollie, my love," said Mr. Stanley, in a half-deprecating tone, "you know I spent the greater part of my spare time only the week before last in search of this girl, and you have all along called her an excellent servant. It seems to me it would be unkind to dismiss her for so slight a cause."

"Slight! that is all you men know about women's trials," was the ungracious response. "Slight as it is, if the like thing should occur again I will dismiss her at once, and attend to my own house-work myself. Think of having flies—the dirty things!—in my house. I should go beside myself in less than a week."

Mr. Stanley gave over the discussion, and we went to the tea-room. There were shining silver service, costly cut glass, rich Sèvres china and choice edibles, but these were not enjoyed, for the mistress of it all was inwardly fuming and fretting, and where this is the case it invariably brings unrest and disquiet to the hearts of those who gather around the board. I felt all this while sitting there, and I thought too how necessary it was for the "heads of a family" to be cheerful and genial at the "family board."

In answer to the bell the girl who had by her oversight so ruffled her mistress's temper came in. She was neat and pleasant-looking, but I saw by the expression of her face that she was still suffering from the effects of Mrs. Stanley's displeasure. I was quite sure she had been weeping. Mr. Stanley strove to be lively and social, but still it was an uncomfortable meal to all, and I was glad when it was over.

Perhaps it may have been inferred from what I have said of my friend that she was naturally of a disagreeable and exacting disposition, but this was not so. Never was a sweeter, kinder-hearted girl than she was, but she had begun her married life with the ambitious design of becoming a "model house-

keeper," and so intent had she been in following out her purpose that she had, imperceptibly to herself acquired the habit of watching the movements of every member of the household lest they should interfere in any of her arrangements, also that of fretting at every trifle, and as I looked upon her face, once so pleasant in its expression, and saw the premature lines of care, or more properly fretfulness, I thought: "Preserve me from ever being a 'model housekeeper'."

"Come now, Hattie," she said, the third day after my arrival, "let us sit down and have a pleasant chat about old times. Everything has seemed to go wrong since you came, and I fear your visit has not been thus far over comfortable." I longed to say what I thought, but could not gather courage. "First tell me about the Card girls," she said, "the two who married, and little Amy, the prettiest of them all, who died the day her intended came home from a four years' voyage. I think it was so hard."

It was a sad story indeed, and I could not often think of it without shedding tears. In compliance with her request I commenced relating to her all the items I had treasured in my mind of our mutual friend, Amy Card.

"Wait a minute," she said, in the midst of my first sentence; "the wind has turned one of the swivels of the outer blind."

So I waited until the inner blinds were drawn, the window raised, and the outer one closed. It was quite a lengthy process, but at last it was ended, and once more I commenced my story. But not more than ten minutes had elapsed before she said:

"I am sorry to disturb you again, but I see a roll of lint under the piano, and I cannot place my mind upon anything as long as there is any dirt about me."

So up she jumped, and went to the piano, stooped down, then returned with a bit of lint about the size of a three-penny bit, saying:

"Such carelessness in servants is unbearable. I shall yet have to do everything myself."

I could not help smiling, though heartily vexed at the interruption. However, I made a third attempt, and had pursued my narrative for nearly half an hour, when, just as I was in the midst of telling her of Amy's intended bridal, of the return of her lover, and of her sudden death, and that the white satin dress which was to have adorned the sweet, fair bride had in its stead been worn for her "coffin-robe," my friend's mind and eyes began to wander about the room, and, starting up she exclaimed:

"I cannot stand it another moment, Hattie, for there is a fly. Doubtless it came in when I opened the window to arrange the blind."

I was indignant.

How the little lady flew round, and what a picture that fly led her, now alighting on the top of a chaise frame, then on the mirror, then ascending the top of the wall.

Mrs. Stanley was really getting quite vexed as she stood there on tip-toe, vainly trying to reach her tormentor with the "feather-duster," which she had seized for a weapon.

I was reminded of the fable of "the mouse and the lion."

"Hattie," she said, "can you not help me a little? Just take your handkerchief and head it, and when once I can drive it into the hall I shall have no trouble in getting it out at the door."

Thus called to the "rescue," I had nothing to do but "enlist," and with our united efforts at last it was driven into the hall and the inner door closed, but in opening the outer door to eject it into the street ere this feat could be performed several of its "boon companions" entered, and now the "fly hunt" was commenced with fresh vigour.

Up stairs and down flew my little hostess, hither and thither, and at last I was stationed as a sentinel on the upper landing to prevent any of the "rebels" choosing the long passage-way beyond for their "headquarters," and finally the "enemy" was vanquished, the "insurrection" quelled, but I had lost the thread of my story, and I think Mrs. Stanley had too, for she said:

"Let me see, Hattie, of what were we speaking when that disgraceful fly came to disturb our comfort?"

"Oh, nothing of any importance," was my laconic reply, for I was determined not to make a fourth commencement, and so ended my story of poor little Amy Card, her early and sad fate swallowed up in the excitement of a "fly hunt."

From my heart I pitied Mrs. George Stanley—"model housekeeper" that she was!

I will not weary you by repeating such scenes, for they were of every-day occurrence. I do not think I ever held one connected conversation of a half-hour's length during my visit without imaginary cares intervening to rob it of its pleasure and interest.

You may think the picture overdrawn, but it is not. In my experience I have found more Mrs. Stanleys than one, though on a smaller scale.

Mr. and Mrs. Stanley, during my stay, invited me to accompany them on a pleasure excursion, but, unfortunately, when the day arrived, I was suffering from headache, and so remained at home, but urged their enjoying the relaxation the trip might afford them, and allow me to be housekeeper.

Harry and Lucy begged hard to accompany their parents.

Mr. Stanley seemed disposed to favour their wishes, and as I looked into their earnest, pleading faces I could not forbear speaking a word in their behalf.

"Well, Mr. Stanley, if you prefer Harry and Lucy's company to mine, you may take them; but I could not be easy a minute," was Mrs. Stanley's answer.

This reply decided the matter at once, and, as I saw Harry's lip quiver while he bravely strove to keep back his tears, and little Lucy hiding her moist eyes in her two little dimpled hands, I could not check the tears that came to my own, and I thought as I drew them both to my bosom and said kind words of cheer to them: "As well as your mother loves you, your happiness is but secondary to cleanliness—her idol."

"What shall we do, Harry, all day?" asked Lucy. "If we could only pick flowers and make wreaths as the other girls and boys do, or if I could take my playthings out of my baby-house, and play with them as Lily Green and Susy Waters do, or if you could have a tub of water, and sail your boat Uncle Billy gave you, we would have such a nice time!—but we can't do anything, Harry, you know, for mamma does not like it."

"No, we can't do anything, that's a fact," said Harry. "When I grow a big man I'll have a house of my own, and you shall live with me, Lula, and we'll have wooden chairs and no carpets, like Mrs. Sand, and you shall play and run and jump just as much as you please, and nobody shall keep crying, 'Don't, don't, don't,' all the time."

"Oh, that will be nice, Harry—I shall like it dearly," exclaimed Lucy, with brightening face, her sorrows all forgotten.

"Dear little children," I said to myself, "your ideas of happiness all centre in a house not too good to use, and for this you would gladly leave your beautiful home, with its rich carpets, long mirrors, rosewood furniture, its daintily laid tables, its choice conservatory and extensive garden," and as I thought I came to the conclusion that in many cases there was more happiness to be found in the dwellings of earth's lowly ones than in the mansions of wealth and pride, where you almost felt that the inhabitants were made for the house, instead of the house for the inhabitants.

I did not wish to teach Harry and Lucy to disregard their parents' wishes, so I said to them that their mother had told me to do just what I pleased to make them happy, then I took them into the garden, and we gathered flowers and made wreaths to our hearts' content.

I procured a large tub, filled it with water, and we spent an hour and more sailing the beautiful boat Uncle Billy had given to Harry; then we went to the play-room, got together all the costly and choice toys, dressed and undressed the large wax doll, and had a miniature tea-party, I as much of a child—for the time—as either Harry or Lucy.

In the course of the day I discovered a little vase of flowers in the corner of the room, at the head of Lucy's small French bedstead.

"Oh, do not take them away!" cried Lucy, "for I do so love to have them there. I wake sometimes in the night and think about them, and it makes me so glad! Julia, the chambermaid, knows all about it, and she puts fresh ones in, and water, too, every day. Isn't she good? But please do not tell mamma, she would throw them out at once, for she calls them 'dirty things.'"

I promised all Lucy desired, thinking how unwise it was in a mother to strive to crush out from the young heart of a child its "love for the flowers"—those silently eloquent emblems of the goodness of our Heavenly Father, so profusely scattered up and down the wide earth—so evidently intended to administer to our love for the "beautiful," and I repeated inwardly those beautiful lines of one of our sweetest poets:

"God might have made the earth bring forth
Enough for great and small,
The oak-tree and the cedar-tree,
Without a flower at all.
He might have made enough—enough
For every want of ours,
For luxury, medicine, and toil,
And yet have made no flowers."

At night when I saw little Harry and Lucy into their beds I felt more than repaid for any little trouble I had taken as they threw their arms about my neck

and said, "Dear Hattie," for so they had ventured to call me during the day, "we shall remember to-day as long as we live."

As I passed through the hall to go below I met Susan, the cook, who told me she was going to seek a new place on the morrow.

"But why," I said, "do you leave? Is not Mrs. Stanley a kind mistress?"

"Very kind indeed, ma'am, excepting one thing. 'Tis fret, fret, fret, from morning till night. I can live in one place as long as any one can, and bear as much, I flatter myself, but Mrs. Stanley I cannot get along with another day. My last mistress was not half so good a woman as Mrs. Stanley, and I stayed with her seven years. She was unreasonable and passionate, but she was not for ever working herself into a stew about nothing as Mrs. Stanley is. I would not stay another week here if they'd give me ten pounds."

Here was another of the troubles Mrs. Stanley brought upon herself by her undue anxiety to keep up her credit as a "model housekeeper."

Her servants invariably became dissatisfied, and left after a few weeks spent in her service.

The time allotted for my visit at last expired, and I must confess, though I was sorry to part with my friends, I experienced a feeling akin to relief as the carriage bore me away from that "nicely kept house," and it was with a new sense of pleasure and satisfaction that I entered my own simple home, devoid of all costly adornings and furnishings.

I went to my unpretending chamber, threw open my blinds and windows, and sitting there with the golden beams of the setting sun flooding every nook and corner of that small room, and the soft evening breeze sweeping over my brow, I enjoyed more in that one hour of luxurious freedom than in the whole of my long visit with my friend, Mrs. George Stanley, that "model housekeeper."

H. N. H.

MR. CAXGROVE'S HOME MISSION.

"REALLY," said Mrs. Caxgrove, "I don't think I had better take it."

"It will do no harm," said the white-haired old missionary, still holding out the little box from which the elegantly dressed lady shrunk. "It will take up but a trifling space on yonder marble-topped table, and who knows the good it may do?"

"Oh, yes, of course," said Mrs. Caxgrove; "but we have so few visitors who are charitably disposed, and in our own family there are so many necessary outlets for money."

"In some of the houses where I am acquainted," persisted the old clergyman, "there is quite a fund raised by friendly fines levied by different members of the family on each other—a penny for gloves or hat left lying about, a penny for a careless or ungrammatical expression, and so on—and it is a very useful as well as charitable institution."

"I daresay," said Mrs. Caxgrove; "but in our family it would scarcely be worth while."

The old man smiled.

"Are you then so absolutely faultless?"

"Oh, no, I did not mean that," Mrs. Caxgrove answered, somewhat confused. "Only—"

"You will allow me to leave the box?" said Mr. Salter, smiling as he placed it on the centre of the marble table, just beneath a basket of camellias, tuberoses, and other noxious plants, the cost of which might have filled it a dozen times over. And Mrs. Caxgrove was too polite to object farther.

"What a nuisance he is," she said to a Mrs. Jaynesford that afternoon. "As if I wanted to turn collecting agent for the Missionary Society. But Mr. Salter is positively a child in the ways of the world."

"I wish he'd get his wife a new silk dress," said Mrs. Jaynesford. "I'm tired of seeing that old figured poplin. Sarah had a new one last Sunday."

"New!" cried Mrs. Caxgrove, elevating her nose scornfully; "it's nothing on earth but the cinnamon brown dyed black!"

"You don't say so!" cried Mrs. Jaynesford. "Did you know that Ellen Black had an India shawl?"

"No!" ejaculated the lady of the house. "And her uncle failed last week!"

"Some people fall very comfortably," sneered Mrs. Jaynesford. "Helen Barr told me last Thursday—"

She checked herself as the dark blue velvet curtain which fell over the embrasure of a bay-window was lifted, and her friend's husband sauntered forth.

"I did not know you were there, Stephen," said Mrs. Caxgrove, colouring a little.

"So I concluded!" he observed, dryly. And, taking up the little missionary box, he held it with a smile towards the visitor.

"I have no pennies," she said, glancing over the contents of her Turkey morocco portmanteau, and slightly tossing her head, as she rose to take leave.

"The stingy creature!" said Mrs. Caxgrove when the door was fairly closed behind her. "I don't believe any one ever knew Myrtilla Jaynesford to give a penny in charity!"

"See here, Lill," said her husband. "I only wish I had a photographic report of your conversation for the last hour!"

"Why?"

"Because you and your friend Mrs. Jaynesford were tearing the rest of the world fearfully into tatters! What does the Bible say about the 'unruly member'?"

"Nonsense!" said Mrs. Caxgrove, reddening. "Myrtilla is a great gossip, but—"

"I beg your pardon, Lill, but you were quite as bad."

"I don't believe it."

"Let's make a bargain, my dear," said Mr. Caxgrove. "I give you a tolerably good allowance of pin money per week, don't I?"

"Yes; but what on earth has that to do with it?"

"Just this: Every time your tongue touches a neighbour's misdoings, or you speak disparagingly of any one, you shall put a sixpence into the missionary box."

"I would just as soon do it as not," said Mrs. Caxgrove, excitedly. "I am sure I never—"

"Is it a bargain?"

"Yes, of course. If it was Myrtilla Jaynesford now—"

Mr. Caxgrove held out the box. Lilla bit her lip, but she dropped in the sixpence.

"Stephen, you are too bad to take me up so!"

"But I thought it was a bargain."

Mrs. Caxgrove swept indignantly across the room. Presently she jerked the bell wire.

"Susan," she said to the girl who answered the summons, "do take those sickening tube roses away. Anybody might know when Mrs. Lawrence has had a ball at her house by the liberality with which she sends the second-hand flowers round among her friends the next day."

"Susan," said Mr. Caxgrove, philosophically, "take that little box to your mistress."

"Stephen!" cried Mrs. Caxgrove, "I only—"

"I know it, my dear," said her husband. "If you say so, I'll release you from the agreement."

"I do not want to be released," said Mrs. Caxgrove, angrily. "Accident happens to be on your side just now."

"On the side of the Home Mission, you mean," said her husband. "By the way, there's that note from Miss Dallas to be answered. Have you forgotten it?"

"What shall I say?"

"Accept her invitation, I suppose."

"Oh, Stephen, I would so much rather go to the opera! It's always so stupid at the Dallas's, with old Mrs. Dallas telling about her coughs and colds, and Jessie always full of the last sewing circle."

"Well, I suppose it isn't very lively," said Mr. Caxgrove, with a sly smile. "Sixpence, Lill, if you please."

"Why, Stephen, what have I said? Oh—to be sure!" Mrs. Caxgrove could not help laughing. "Well, it's worth sixpence to have the privilege of speaking my mind. Any way, I shall send regrets."

"They'll be an awful fib, then!" said Mr. Caxgrove.

"Only a polite fiction. There, I haven't a sheet of note paper left! Mrs. Captain Sibthorpe sent in and borrowed the last yesterday; and Mrs. Sibthorpe never returns anything she borrows, by any possibility."

"Like the wicked woman in Scripture," said her husband. "Sixpence, my love."

"It's too bad!" cried Lilla, with flaming cheeks. "I didn't mean to be taken up this way."

"I only wish Mrs. Jaynesford or one of her set would call again," said Mr. Caxgrove, roguishly. "There goes the bell now!"

"I shall be on my guard," said his wife. "I do believe it's Mrs. Montague, the very one of all others I most wished to see. No, it isn't either—it's old Miss Ducey! Oh, dear! now I shall be bored for a mortal half-hour."

"The Home Mission again!" said Mr. Caxgrove, calmly presenting the inexorable box, at the same instant in which Miss Ducey was shown into the drawing-room.

Miss Ducey had come to tell Mrs. Caxgrove all the particulars of a recent wedding, and she stayed an hour and a half. And when she went away she circulated a report that "poor dear Mrs. Caxgrove's husband was really getting quite insane on the subject of money, for all the time she was there he sat in the bay window, pretending to be busy with a book, but every now and then he would repeat to himself, 'Sixpence! Sixpence! Sixpence!'"

"And, my dear," added Miss Ducey, "I never saw

a poor creature so mortified as Mrs. Caxgrove. She turned as red as beetroot!"

"Stephen," cried the wife as soon as her visitor had gone, "it's too bad for you to make me responsible for the tongue of an old talebearer like Miss Ducey! I couldn't stop her mouth!"

"Of course not," said Stephen; "your mouth is the only one for which you are accountable, and it has just got you into another sixpenny difficulty. Upon my word the Home Mission is making money at a railroad rate! Don't look so vexed, Lill, darling, all this only proves to you that you really were getting into an almost unconscious habit of criticism and fault-finding."

"But I declare I won't be caught again," said Mrs. Caxgrove, resolutely.

At the end of five minutes she came back with a telegram in her hand.

"You'll have to go to the station, Stephen," she said, "to meet the Ravens. Here is a telegraphic dispatch to say they are on their way to visit us. Oh, dear, why can't they stay at home? What shall I do with those three horrid, disagreeable young savages of children? I declare I'd rather pay—"

"Sixpence, Mrs. Caxgrove," said her husband.

Then he went off to meet the train.

At the end of the week the missionary box was opened, and found to contain thirty shillings.

"I didn't know I was so bad, Stephen," said Mrs. Caxgrove, half laughing, half crying. "For the future I will try to 'set a watch upon the door of my lips.'"

Mr. Caxgrove counted out the money and sent it to Mr. Salter, with a little note, saying that the missionary box had met with better luck than his wife anticipated.

"We'll set the little trap to catch a bad habit again," he said, laughingly, to Lilla. "I hope the money may do the Home Mission much benefit, but I am sure it has already wrought a good work in my own little domestic home mission."

"I think so too, Stephen," said Lilla. A. R.

A GENUINE FORTUNE STORY.—So many stories are told of persons in humble stations suddenly coming into the possession of fortunes that the public are inclined to look upon most of such with suspicion, but we are assured that the present one is genuine. A man named George Kelly, who has been many years in Halifax, and has recently been driver of the city prison van, has received reliable information that his father and brother have recently died, leaving him a large fortune, including 200,000*l.* invested in a bank in Dublin, 7,000*l.* available cash in the hands of his brother's executors, and three steamships. A part of this fortune will come into Kelly's possession at once without dispute. The ownership of the 200,000*l.*, however, will have to be tested in the courts, as the husband of Kelly's sister alleges that the will is a fraudulent one, and has instituted an action to have it set aside.

WHENCE COMES WATER?—In describing the growth of a river, beginning with such a stream as the Thames at the sea, the course is traced farther and farther back till its source is reached in the Cotswold Hills, whence a number of small streams start, and join together to form the first definite brook, which afterwards swells into the great river. But here, as Dr. Tyndall recently pointed out, where the ordinary observer's task ends, the philosopher's begins. Whence comes the water? Observation of the streamlets in summer time shows that the supply slackens, dwindles away, and in some cases ceases altogether; but, in winter, the same little brooks are swollen into bounding torrents by the rains. Rain is then the source of a river. But then rain must have a source. Can science go farther back still? It is the tendency of the human mind to analyse backwards, and to inquire whence things have come. When they inquired as to rain they soon came to the conclusion that it came from the clouds. But what are clouds? This is exactly the way in which philosophers examine nature; they go from link to link of the chain, as far as they can by observation, and then they experiment and compare details, results, etc. What are clouds? Is there anything in our experience which resembles clouds? The steam from a locomotive not only resembles but is a real cloud.

AUTULETATION.—The Principal of the Inland Revenue Laboratory, Mr. G. Phillips, reports that 432 samples of tobacco were examined by him in 1870 for the Excise Department, and 312 were found to be adulterated, the adulterants being wheat and rice starches, sugar, liquorice, lampblack, catechu, and colouring matter. The amount of adulteration ranged up to 4 per cent. starch, 40 per cent. sugar, and 65 per cent. liquorice. Almost all the samples found adulterated with sugar and liquorice were "Cavendish"; it is believed that it is smuggled into this country in small quantities by sailors.

Five samples of coffee were examined in 1870; one was found adulterated with 10 per cent. of sago starch. There were 14 samples of beer and materials used in brewing examined; 9 were found adulterated, the adulterants being sugar, treacle, ground rice, liquorice powder, grains of paradise, and in one instance tobacco. Of lime and lemon juice 531 samples were examined, and 63 of them were rejected. In the Customs Department several cases occurred in which articles entered as "fruit essence," "hair dye," "naphtha," etc., were found to contain a considerable quantity of dutiable alcohol.

FAETIÆ.

THE BOOT AND SHOE TRADE is the safest to invest in—every pair is sold before it is finished.

"It is remarkable that you are always forgetting my name," said a man named Flint. "Why," said Quilt, "it's a doosed hard name to remember."

A YOUNG lady wrote to the Postmaster General, complaining of the irregularity of the mails, stating that her beau hadn't been to see her for two days.

An old farmer in Hampshire recently killed a pig, and being asked how much it weighed replied that it did not weigh as much as he expected, and he did not expect it would.

LITERAL.—Mistress: "Mary, go into the sitting-room and tell me how the thermometer stands." Mary (after investigating it): "It stands on the mantelpiece just ag'in the wall, ma'am."

THE enterprising individual who is organizing a brass band of twenty women in Cincinnati says if they learn half as many "airs" as they put on the experiment cannot fail of being a success.

A LITTLE girl, when asked by her mother about suspicious little bites in the sides of a dozen choice apples, answered: "Perhaps, mamma, they may have been frost bitten; it was so cold last night." The mother retreated.

DRUMS AND FIFES.—Mr. Cardwell proposes, in reorganizing the army, to unite all the forces of the country in "one harmonious whole." Hitherto, in military affairs, that description has only been applicable to some of the bands.—Punch.

KNIGHT-THOUGHTS.—Many are curious to know when and where the sheriffs are to be knighted. We should say the right tap would be the bar called Temple Bar, where they might get the requisite tap on the right shoulder.—Fun.

A DRUGGIST has a tonic which, he says, will give its taker an appetite that will enable him to swallow an elephant. We will never swallow any of the tonic, because elephants are scarce hereabouts, and we could not afford to buy one every week or two.

"THE UPPER TEN."

Stationary Caddy: "Hallo! where are ye off to?"

Second Caddy: "Home, of course. A four-wheeler is quite respectable enough for anybody that would be out on a night like this.—Punch.

MARRYING BY WEIGHT.—A clergyman in Iowa has swept away the old-established rules of marrying for a fee, and announces that he shall hereafter marry by weight, charging four cents per pound for the happy man, and two cents for the bride.

A CALIFORNIAN declares that he has prolonged his life by sleeping with his finger-tips touching his toes, and has invented a machine to hold the body in that position when in repose. He assumes that the vital electric currents, instead of running off and being wasted, are thus kept in an even circumflow.

"STOLEN BITE."

Sweet Sister: "Now don't be a cross boy—have this nice jam ma has left us."

Cross Boy: "Shan't! Don't like it! 'Tain't half so good as if she had forgotten her keys and we'd grigged it."—Fun.

BOYS said a school-master the other day, "what is the meaning of all that noise in school?" "It is Bill Smith, sir, who is imitating a locomotive."

"Come up here, William," said the teacher; "if you are turning into a locomotive, it is high time you were switched off."

NON POSSE COMET-ATUS.

Professor Plantamour did not foretell the comet that is to smash us all next August. It is the invention of somebody who loves a "plant." The tale is all out of his own head, in short he is himself the comet. So, after all, this threatened explosive turns out to be a cracker.—Fun.

THE FAIR AND THE UNFAIR.—The University of Edinburgh still refuses to allow ladies at that seat of learning to graduate in medicine. An Act of Parliament is requisite to compel its ruling trades' unionists to do them justice. If ladies, medical students or others, do not obtain that, it is perhaps because they are

unrepresented. This is a consideration which seems rather to entitle women to the suffrage, which they may obtain in time, although the authorities of Edinburgh University seem determined not to let them win their rights by degrees.—*Punch*.

READING SPECTACLES.

An Irishman, seeing persons reading with spectacles, went to buy a pair to enable himself to read. He tried several pairs, and told the shopman he could not read with any of them.

"Can you read at all?" asked the shopman.
"No!" was the reply: "if I could do you think I would be such an ass as to buy spectacles?"

ÆSTHETICS OF DRESS.

Customer (he has been bidden to a wedding, and can't make up his mind in the matter of trouser patterns, but at last says: "Oh, there! that'll do, I sh'd think!"

Tailor: "Pardon me, sir; if you are going to be 'best man,' the shade is hardly tender enough!"—*Punch*.

THE "NIMBLE NINEPENCE."

City Gent (after a critical inspection): "What do you want for that 'Moonlight'?"

Picture Dealer: "I'll sell yer the two a bargain, shir! Cheap ash dirt, shir! Shevnty-five guineash apiece, shir! I'll warrant 'em undoubted Smeethers's. Shevnty-five—"

City Gent: "Oh, come, I don't mind giving you thirty shillings for the pair."

Picture Dealer (closing with alacrity): "Done! With you, shir!" [City Gent is in for 'em! *Punch*.

AN HONEST CLAIM.—A girl, who sued a false lover for a breach of promise, laid the damages at forty pounds. In court, in answer to the inquiry why that sum had been named, she answered, that counting the time she had spent "sitting up" with him as worth at the rate of nine shillings per week, she had figured up the hours passed in his company, and adding the value of candles and wood consumed, she had found that it was the amount due. There was no doubt in the mind of the judge that her claim was an honest one, and a verdict was rendered accordingly.

GETTING INSURED.

A thin, cadaverous-looking German, about fifty years of age, entered the office of a health insurance company in Liverpool, the other day, and inquired: "Ish de man in what insurances de people's helts?"

The agent politely answered: "I attend to that business, sir."
"Vell, I vants my helts insured; vot you charge?"

"Different prices," answered the agent; "from three to ten shillings a year. Pay ten shillings a year, and you get ten shillings a week in case of sickness."

"Vell," said mynheer, I vants ten shillings' wort." The agent inquired his state of health.

"Vell, I ish sick all de time. I'm shaust out de bed two, tree hours a day, and de doctor says he can't do noting more goot for me."

"If that's the state of your health," returned the agent, "we can't insure it. We only insure persons who are in good health."

At this mynheer bristled up in great anger.
"You must tink I'm a pigstupid! Vot! you tink I pay you ten shillings for insure my helts ven I vas vell?"

THE SQUIRE'S INDIGNATION.—Old Squire H— was a very successful and substantial farmer, and a more amazing eater never lived in any town anywhere. And especially much did he eat when fresh pork was to be his nourishment. Well, at a certain time one of his hogs had been killed. The next morning there was to be fresh pork for breakfast, and the old man ate most wondrously. In the course of the afternoon he ate his luncheon, consisting of bread and butter, mince pie, and cheese. At noon his dinner consisted of fresh pork, pickles, mince pie, and the usual accompaniments. His afternoon luncheon was like that of the forenoon. When he came home to supper his favourite dish had not been prepared as part of that meal. The old man fretted and scolded till fresh pork was added to the substantial. He ate voraciously as usual. In the evening he toasted some cheese, buttered, and ate it. Just before going to bed he roasted a couple of apples, and ate them. In the night he was taken with a severe colic; the doctor was with him till morning, and nearly wrought a miracle in the old man's life. The next day Bolles, one of his neighbours, went in to condole with the old squire. "Faithful Bolles," said the old worthy, "I liked to have died last night. I'll never eat another roast apple as long as I live. I never did like them very well; and last night I ate only two, and they nearly killed me."

NO CONFIDENCE IN WHITE NECKTIES.

Rev. Mr. F—, of B—, who had accepted an invitation to preach on a certain Sunday, last winter,

was delayed until the last moment, and did not arrive in town until late in the morning on which he was to preach.

He hastened to the clerk of the hotel and requested him to procure a carriage for him, which was complied with, and he was soon driven to the church, with not a moment to spare. He stopped from the conveyance, and hastened up the aisle, when, to his great surprise, he heard a suppressed tittering and a buzz of astonishment, for which he could not account, until, chancing to hear a footstep behind him, he turned and beheld the cause. The coachman, muffled to the chin, with a fur cap on his head, a whip under his arm, a pair of cavalry boots on his feet, had followed him into the church. Rev. Mr. F— was about to address him, when Jehu exclaimed:

"Ye ain't paid me. I want my fare."
The good minister, greatly mortified, tried to explain that he had requested the hotel clerk to settle with him.

"Oh, yes," returned the hackman, "I daresay. That won't wash. Cash on delivery is my terms. I don't know you. I drove a fellow with a white necktie to the train last week, and he gave me the slip, and I ain't seen him since, and that time I made up my mind that there warn't no virtue in a white necktie; so cash up."

WINTER SONG OF THE SOUL.

We miss the sweet music of fountains,
We miss the glad song of the breeze
That breathed from the far-away mountains
Upon the green harp of the trees.
Yes, Winter, we miss the sweet glowing
Of Summer's Queen over the land;
Ah, why hast thou fettered the flowing
Of brooks by thy terrible hand?

But short is the time of the chaining,
But short is the chill on the earth,
And then, not a dark veil remaining,
Will new flowers start into birth.
So Winter to us is replying;
Then let for a time tempests roll:
Some reason in matter's fur dying,
But no one was made for the Soul.

W. R. W.

GEMS.

He who is never satisfied with others may learn, if he chooses, that nobody is ever satisfied with him.

The greater the difficulty the more glory in surmounting it. Skillful pilots gain their reputation from storms and tempests.

EVERY period of life has its prejudices; whoever saw old age that did not applaud the past and condemn the present times?

INJURIES accompanied by insults are never forgiven; all men on these occasions are good haters, and lay out their revenge at compound interest.

THE human race are sons of sorrow born, and each must have his portion. Vulgar minds refuse, or crouch beneath their load; the brave bear theirs without repining.

If we but rightly improve our time and faculties we shall be happy. There are springs of the most refined and elevated enjoyment ever open to those who seek wisdom.

He who betrays another's secrets because he has quarrelled with him was never worth the sacred name of friend; a breach of kindness on one side will not justify a breach on the other.

In all governments there must, of necessity, be both the law and the sword. Laws without arms would give us not liberty but licentiousness, and arms without laws would produce not subjection but slavery.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

SOAP.—The following is a recipe for a good, cheap article: Add to 10 quarts of water 6 pounds of quicklime (shell lime is best) and 6 pounds common washing soda. Put all together and boil for half an hour, and let it stand all night to clear. Draw off the lye, and add to it 1 pound common resin, and 7 pounds of fat (any fat will do). Boil this for half an hour, then let it stand till cool, and out into bars.

ANTIDOTE TO OPIUM.—In a recent case of accidental poisoning by an overdose of morphia the administration of 18 drops of Norwood's tincture of green hellebore was followed by a complete cure. The narcotic had obtained such mastery over the unfortunate patient that the pupils of the eyes had contracted, and the jaws had to be forced

open to give the medicine, which was mixed with two ounces of brandy. All appearance of poisonous effects had vanished within an hour.

STATISTICS.

THE INFLUENCE OF MARRIAGE.—The *Medical Press and Circular* says M. Bertillon has made a communication on this subject to the Brussels Academy of Medicine, which has been published in the *Revue Scientifique*. From 25 to 30 years of age the mortality per 1,000 in France amounts to 6.2 in married men, 10.2 in bachelors, and 21.8 in widows. In Brussels the mortality of married women is 9 per 1,000, girls the same, and widows as high as 16.9. In Belgium, from 7 per 1,000 among married men, the number rises to 8.6 in bachelors and 24.6 in widows. The proportion is the same in Holland. From 8.2 in married men it rises to 11.7 in bachelors and 16.9 in widows, or 12.8 among married women, 8.5 in spinsters, and 13.8 in widows. The result of all the calculations is that from 25 to 30 years of age the mortality per 1,000 is 4 in married men, 10.4 in bachelors, and 22 in widows. This beneficial influence of marriage is manifested at all ages, being always more strongly marked in men than in women.

MISCELLANEOUS.

THE Secretary of State desires that the rule that clergyman are not to be engaged, either at home or abroad, to officiate to troops without his sanction, may be strictly observed in future.

THE LOVE OF KNOWLEDGE.—Most contrary to indolence is the love of knowledge; a foe to sleep, a friend to watching. Therefore, ever rousing, and awakening, and sharpening the intellect, it constrains that faculty to traverse the whole field of research in every possible direction.

A WORTHY QUAKER.—A worthy Quaker thus wrote: "I expect to pass through this world but once; if, therefore, there can be any kindness I can show, or any good thing I can do to any fellow human being, let me do it now. Let me not defer or neglect it, for I will not pass this way again."

WORTHY OF IMITATION.—The "Heathen Chinese" prides himself on paying up all his debts at the beginning of each year, and places over his door an emblem that he is square with the world. This custom prevails throughout the empire and must be complied with to secure a good financial standing.

ENEMIES WITHOUT, TRAITORS WITHIN.—A waggon, laden with slowly hammered axes, passed through a neighbouring wood. The axe shone upon the steel, and the trees of the forest trembled at the sight. "Who will protest as these iron will level us all?" Thus did they complain, rustling their leaves with anguish. But an oak of many years, replied, "Fear not; if none of you lend handles to these axes, their blades can do you no injury."

AGITATION.—Agitation is a part of the sublime order of nature. In thunder it shakes the stagnant air, which would otherwise exhale miasma and death. And in the immortal thoughts of duty, of humanity, and of liberty, it so rouses the hearts of men that they think themselves inspired; and not the mercenary clamour of the market-place, nor the outcries of politicians, clutching at the prizes of ambition, can suppress the utterances that true men believe themselves heaven committed to declare.

PRE SALTUM.—Nantwich, in Cheshire, has for some years past been gradually sinking, owing to the withdrawal of the lime from the subterranean salt lakes which underlie the town. The slip this winter occurred about the same spot where similar landslips happened one or two years ago. The pit is about 300 yards in circumference, about 100 feet deep, and its sides are almost perpendicular. The inhabitants much fear that the town itself may ultimately suffer, not by gradual desecration—that they are used to (it is not uncommon to enter a house from the street into what had formerly been the first floor)—but by one of these sudden collapses.

THE TRUTHFUL GIRL.—A little girl once came into a house and told her mother something very improbable. Those who were sitting in the room with her mother did not believe her, for they did not know the character of the little girl. But the mother replied at once: "I have no doubt that it is true, for I never knew my daughter to tell a falsehood." Is there not something noble in a character like this? Must not the little girl have felt happy in the consciousness of possessing her mother's entire confidence? Oh, how different must have been her feelings from those of the child whose word cannot be believed, and who is regarded by every one with suspicion! Shame, shame on the child who has not magnanimity enough to tell the truth.

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NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

SUSIE must be content with one sweetheart at a time.
LILY.—The writing is bold and good. The address should be furnished.

T. R. S.—A better description, both of personal appearance and occupation, is desirable.

E. A. S.—The contribution, being full of inaccuracies and ineligibilities, is unsuitable.

DWARD.—You can do nothing. It is a matter in which nature will be neither coerced nor controlled.

RICHARD M.—The enclosure will be perused in due course and the subject considered.
W. J. C. (Belfast).—The versified attempt at jocoseness does not appear to repay even the mechanical labour employed in its production.

ANABELL.—The quantities are the shells of about twenty green walnuts to one quart of the cheapest French vin ordinaire.

W. T.—As a rule young ladies do not place much reliance on a sweetheart whose age is under five-and-twenty.

JOHN H.—As a rule young ladies should be cautioned against placing their happiness at the mercy of a good, easy man, "fond of good company and music."

W. R. J.—The talk reads as tall as the stature, and under all the circumstances, the application is out of place.

J. H. F.—Where no description of features is given, and the age is also omitted, nothing but a very vague notion of your appearance can be formed. Such vagueness is fatal to a man in search of a wife.

R. K. (Waterford).—We are unable to give the author's name. To furnish the particulars requested in the former portion of your note is a task about as difficult as to give directions for the pursuit of the philosopher's stone.

CLARA M.—There are cases on record in which men have fallen in love with women from a mere perusal of letters which the lady has written to third parties. As far as we can judge, however, the letter under consideration is not likely to produce such a result.

W. M.—The handwriting is formal, and for your age perhaps too much of the character of a schoolboy's copy-book. The specimen contains a flagrant orthographical error which suggests the thought that if for two or three years you were a little more studious and a little less love-sick your future welfare might be promoted.

ELISA O.—There is a composition sold for the purpose of dentists. It is unlikely however that you will be able to dispense with professional aid, and your most prudent course is to obtain it at once. The moisture referred to is constitutional and cannot be prevented. The handwriting is very neat.

C. F.—If only your name has been used, and not your property, it will be difficult for you to obtain redress, because your grievance cannot be very clearly established. There is no monopoly in a name, and as a matter of fact probably many individuals exist who bear a name like yours.

A REGULAR SUBSCRIBER.—The practice of smoking tobacco should be avoided by youths. The age of twenty-five is early enough to commence the habit; then, if moderately indulged, no harm comes of it provided it is agreeable to the smoker and does not disarrange either his appetite or digestion.

HELENA H.—Most ladies who wear engagement rings choose the third finger of the left hand for that purpose. Books on etiquette are issued by the popular publishers of the present day, and may often be procured at the railway bookstalls, and always by order of any bookseller. The handwriting is very much cramped.

E. L.—A charitably disposed individual would probably account for the phenomenon you describe by some overpowering sensation of heat, grief, aberration, fatigue, excitement, or bewilderment, during the paroxysms of which the movements of the persons so acting should not be too closely scrutinized.

J. A. W.—The French dictionary published under the auspices of the Académie Française is, we should say, the work of which you are in quest. This dictionary is comprised in two volumes, quarto, and can occasionally be picked up at a second-hand bookseller's in London for a comparatively small sum.

PARANA.—The prospect is but visionary as yet. Should it ever be carried out the modus operandi will be a joint-stock company. In such a case the shares will doubtless be subscribed for by inhabitants of both nations. Indeed capitalists of all countries may become interested, for the swiftness of communication between every part of the world has a tendency to give a cosmopolitan character to

all large financial undertakings. The second question cannot be answered, because the trade is too immature for any statistics to have been recorded.

W. J. F.—The launching of the "Great Eastern" steamship occupied from 3rd November, 1857, to 31st January, 1858. The gross tonnage of the ship is 22,500. The boilers are tubular, and carry 25 lb. pressure. They consume about twelve tons of coal an hour. The vessel carries about 10,000 tons of coal, and her speed is about 15 knots.

G. A.—You are to be congratulated more upon your escape from the thraldom than upon the attempt to perpetuate the memory of the chain by which you were bound. The verses are bad in their construction, deficient in real feeling, and for any notion they convey to the contrary their author would seem to have yet to learn the meaning of the power of love, or the fierceness of the passion which often bears the same name.

STEAM ENGINE.—What are called general lovers are necessary adjuncts to quadrille parties, picnics, and such like social gatherings. They are amusing and so answer their purpose. Like butterflies sipping sweets from every flower their best days are over when the brightness of their wings fades. However much they may contribute to a lady's pleasure they seldom get a place in her esteem, and she must esteem before she can love, honour, and obey.

C. E. H.—Mr. Dove's recipe for the wash with which gun barrels are browned is as follows:—One ounce of muriate tincture of steel, one ounce of spirits of wine, quarter of an ounce of muriate of mercury, quarter of an ounce of strong nitric acid, one eighth of an ounce of bluestone, and one quart of water. The above are well mixed and allowed to stand a month to amalgamate. The barrels having been previously cleaned with lime, the mixture is laid on lightly with a sponge or rag every two hours, and scratched off with a steel scratch-brush every morning until the barrels are dark enough. The acid is then quenched by pouring boiling water on the barrels.

LIVE AS YOU OUGHT TO LIVE.

Live as you ought to live: not in seclusion,
Hiding yourself from your friend and your foe;
Shutting your doors against kindly intrusion,
Shutting your eyes to the evils below.

Live as you ought to live: not in derision,
Scorning your fellows and slighting your kind;
Only for self making generous provision,
Only to selfish indulgence inclined.

Live as you ought to live: helping your brother
With kindness or charity, as he has need;
Even the smile that's bestowed on another
In value the whole of your wealth may exceed.

Live as you ought to live: this your endeavour,
To live like a Christian—not worshipping self,
Nor slighting its uses, remembering ever
That he is the hero who conquers himself.

J. P.

SCHWARTZ, thirty, tall, handsome, and fond of music, would like to marry a widow about twenty-six.

ROBERT, twenty-one, dark, slender, affectionate, and a teetotaler, wishes to marry a young lady, accomplished, cheerful, and good looking.

HOWLAND, twenty-six, tall, moderately good looking, and fond of home, wishes to marry a lady about his own age.

LILLIAN, eighteen, tall, fair complexion, blue eyes, brown hair, wishes to correspond with a gentleman with a view to matrimony; he must be tall and fair.

HANNAH, twenty, medium height, very loving and affectionate, fond of music and dancing, and would make a dutiful wife.

IONATHA, nineteen, tall, fair, hazel eyes, loving, and domesticated. Respondent should be dark, and not more than twenty.

BLANCHE, thirty-two, medium height, fair, kind, and good tempered. Would like to marry a good, sensible, steady man.

A. R., twenty-three, tall, dark hair and eyes, and loving disposition. Respondent must be a steady, respectable mechanic, a little her senior; a native of Southampton preferred.

EDITH S., middling height, fair, with blue eyes, would like to marry a young man who is tall, dark, very affectionate, fond of home, steady, industrious, and has a moderate income.

HELEN ELIZABETH, twenty, dark brown hair, dark gray eyes, good tempered, affectionate, domesticated, and musical. Respondent must be tall, amiable, fond of music and home; a clerk in a good position preferred.

C. J. S., twenty-one, medium height, very good looking, fond of music, and a volunteer. Respondent must be about twenty-two, tall, dark, accomplished, and have a good income.

CLARA, twenty-three, a domestic servant, fond of home, and amiable. Respondent should be steady, industrious, fond of home, and have a little money; a mechanic preferred.

JOS. COMET, twenty, rather short, good looking, and a compositor. Respondent must be about twenty-three, tall, domesticated, fond of children and home, and have a good income.

MARTHA, twenty-two, tall, fair, blue eyes, golden hair, and nice looking, wishes to correspond with a tall, rather dark gentleman with a view to matrimony; he must be loving and true.

LUCY, nineteen, short and stout, dark hair and eyes, loving, domesticated, and fond of home and children. Respondent must be steady, industrious, and able to keep a wife comfortably.

R. T. H., twenty, rather short, rather dark, very good natured, very well educated, but without money. Respondent must be not more than twenty-six, very tall, dark, accomplished, a very good pianiste, and have a little money.

ARTHUR J. F., twenty, rather tall, very good looking, dark hair, eyes, and moustache, a good musician, and ex-

ceedingly fond of music. Respondent must be a little younger than himself, rather tall, handsome, a brunette, accomplished, very fond of children; a young lady preferred with a good income.

AMY H., nineteen, medium height, dark hair and eyes, handsome, accomplished, and passionately fond of music and children. Respondent must be about twenty-three, rather tall, dark, good looking, and in receipt of a very good income.

A. C., twenty-one, medium height, light hair and moustache, good tempered, fond of home, and has a knowledge of French. Respondent must be about twenty-five, tall, dark, fond of music and children; money not so requisite as good figure.

THOMAS H. H., twenty-three, medium height, rather dark, very fond of dancing, and in receipt of a good salary. Respondent must be about his own age, rather tall, a brunette, and have a good taste for music; a lady in receipt of a good income indispensable.

N. E. W., medium height, good looking, a shopkeeper in a country valley, wants to make his home happy; he is in a fair position with good prospects. Respondent must be a mild and loving young lady about twenty-two, and have a little money.

ANNIE AND CARRIE, two domestic servants, would like to marry two respectable young men. "Annie" is twenty-four, medium height, nice looking, with an abundance of golden hair. "Carrie" is twenty, medium height, dark, nice looking, loving, and would make a good wife.

MARIAN, medium height, brown hair and eyes, happy disposition, good features, domesticated, accomplished, and has a good income. Respondent must be tall, dark, loving, fond of home, and a gentleman in a good position in Manchester preferred, about twenty-one or twenty-five years of age.

KATE AND LILLIAN, machinists. "Kate," twenty-one, a handsome blonde, would like to marry a good-looking, dark mechanic. Respondent must be steady and respectable; "Kate" would try to make him a loving wife. "Lillie," nineteen, a pretty brunette, dark brown hair, natural curls, a merry blue eye, a kind and loving heart, which she is willing to bestow on a dark and handsome young mechanic.

COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED:

R. A. is responded to by—"C. H." twenty-one, medium height, dark, highly respectable, is a domestic servant who would make a loving and faithful wife, and thinks she is just the young woman who will suit him.

MORTIMER by—"Bessie B." twenty-one, tall, fair, and domesticated.

J. J. by—"Amy," twenty-seven, medium height, domesticated, rather dark, and would make a loving wife. **HUBERT** by—"Susie," who thinks she would suit him. She is fair, domesticated, and loving.

CAMELIA by—"K. W.," who has a good business of his own.

HARCOURT by—"Annie G.," eighteen, tall, dark hair, dark eyes, good tempered, loving, would make a good wife.

MAHATABEL by—"J. S. D.," twenty-seven, 5ft. 7in., good looking, and an architect by profession in comfortable circumstances.

LYDIA by—"A. H. C.," twenty-three, tall, rather fair, well educated, loving and fond of home; is a clerk getting 200l. a year.

E. G. B. by—"Rose," twenty-two, dark, rather pretty, very loving, and would have no objection to go to Canada in the summer.

BRIGHT EYES by—"Tom B.," twenty-five, fair, who is likely to remain in port for something over three years, and able to keep a wife comfortably.

ALFRED S. by—"Louisa," tall, fair, blue eyes, well educated, used to his trade, and of a very respectable family in the provision trade.

ANNIE by—"Happy Will," 5ft. 9in., dark, good looking, steady, fond of music and home, master of a good business, and able to support a wife.

NANCY by—"L. S.," thirty, medium height, fair complexion, rather stout, in a good trade, who thinks he will suit her.

PILOT by—"E. G.," thirty-one, who answers to all the requirements of the "Thames Pilot." "E. G." would make an industrious, loving wife to a good and loving husband.

CAPTAIN by—"Sarah B. C.," thirty, 5ft. 11in., a widow without children, dark hair and eyebrows, fair complexion, good tempered, loving, industrious, and fond of home.

ANNETTE S. by—"C. R.," with the intention of making her a good husband. "C. R." has been a total abstainer for fifteen years, is a very steady man, and has a little business.

SUSAN would like to hear from "A. B. C.," assuring her he is fond of home.

The following cannot be inserted: "Fred," "Blue Beard," "A. Z.," "Caledonia," "Margaret," and "Matilda."

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